THE WELSH BORDER.

HOYER & HEPPEL

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THE WELSH BORDER

BY M. A. HOYER

BY THE ROMAN WALL.

THE CONVERSION OF FATHER PIERRE.

WE FOUR CHILDREN.

A MISSING MESSENGER.

THE LITTLE GIRL WHO DID NOT LIKE HER NOSE, &c.

THE DYKE, NEAR PRESTEIGN

C. Robinson.

THE WELSH BORDER

ITS CHURCHES, CASTLES AND DYKE

BY

M. A. HOYER

AND

M. L. HEPPEL, B.A.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SKETCHES AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY M. A. HOYER

LONDON
DAVID NUTT, 57–59 LONG ACRE
1911

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TO

REBECCA BOURNE

BEST AND KINDEST OF FRIENDS

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN the Garden of Eden comes to be discovered and we reach the Gate where stood the Angel with the Flaming Sword, which turned every way, it will not, I think, be the fair lawns and glades which we shall first seek out, but rather we shall turn and gaze long at the pathway by which our First Parents went weeping down into the World which lay all before them where to choose their Home.

The more we meditate on the Mystery of Humanity the more we yearn to know the beginning of its strange eventful history, and the more our thought goes back to the Source and Origin of our nature. From what mysterious Fount in that dim and silent East welled up our life, this triple life of soul and spirit and body? From whence, in pulsating currents, poured forth that Torrent of Humanity, that Flow of the Generations, which swept, one after the other, across the broad spaces between East and West? What like were those men of old? We try to conjure up a picture of the

great procession, and their wild, white faces pass us as faces in a dream, or as we see them in wet, black streets revealed for a moment by some flickering lamp, and then disappearing into the darkness. Poor suffering Brothers and Sisters who first tramped out a path amid the briars and thorns of an untrodden world. How much you must have endured! How much we owe to you!

We know so little of them, these progenitors of ours: they have left so few traces! We can only conjecture of their struggles and achievements by a few fragments of bone, a few rough stone implements buried in river drifts or in caves among the remains of strange and appalling animals. Palæolithic man we name him now. Then later man becomes more manlike. He has found out Fire! How did he discover it? Dear Sir Thomas Browne thought that we may be indebted for some of our knowledge to the 'courteous Spirits.' Perhaps it was some kindly angel who whispered the secret, the momentous and blessed secret, to some shivering Ancestor! Ah, what a discovery was that! Now is man indeed man. Now is he miles higher and stronger than even the Mammoth or the sabre-toothed Lion; a fearsome beast that! Now he makes him stronger weapons and better tools; he cooks his food—without, let us hope, always burning down his house to roast his pigs; he buries his

dead with care and ceremonial rites, having dreamed of immortality. He raises great stones and worships among them that Something higher than himself of Whom he has become conscious. At last he learns to write, to put his thoughts into words, and engrave them and the record of his deeds on Tablets of Stone. He has become articulate to the future and History is born !

Once the Grip of the Past has fastened on the mind, it will not easily relax its hold. One learns to grope, to go backward. Modern History with its minutiæ is profoundly interesting, but there is a deeper, a more emotional charm in peering back into those dim and hollow recesses from which come such mystic whisperings. Like the Enchanters of old who peeped and muttered out of the dust, come the messages from cave and tomb and barrow and long-forgotten Temple to the curious ear. Across centuries of silence we can hear and interpret because of our human kinship.

It was, I think, in obedience to this strange obsession that the journey recorded in this little book was taken. We wanted to find out something old ! We had neither the money nor the time to go far afield. Neither Egypt nor Babylon, Palestine nor Crete, were for us, but in our own little Island there were things to seek. We had been along the Roman Wall between Newcastle and the Solway

Firth, but that was distinct and clear. Where the Roman Legions marched they generally left broad enough footmarks. But around their roads and forts and towns we had become aware of a dimmer world. Traces of peoples and races who made no Itineraries, and whose memories remain only in the histories of nations not their own. Men who were not yet fully articulate: some of them later in time than the Roman, perhaps, but earlier in their stage of development, and who for centuries could only chant their doings in forgotten songs—Iberian, Celt, Pict, Scot, and Cymro!

One day, talking of these things, some one said tentatively, 'Offa's Dyke!' Just the two words, but they caught on; they clung to the memory. We began to question. Who was Offa, and what was his Dyke? Dimly the title seemed familiar. One had a faint notion that Offa was a Saxon King. But what was the Dyke? Was it a Ditch or a Rampart or both? Was it of stone or an earthwork? Where was it? Did it still exist? A hurried consultation of an Encyclopædia revealed the fact that Offa had flourished in the eighth century. Could it be possible that anything he had constructed could exist now after eleven hundred years? Of course the Roman Wall existed, and that was older, but that was built of stone joined with such cement as the Romans knew how

to make, and even that had been destroyed where city life and cultivation had come near it, and the portion extending over the wild and lonely hills of Northumberland had alone resisted the waste of the ages. But Offa's Dyke appeared to be but an earthen boundary.

But still the thought clung, and then the proposition came, 'Shall we go and see for ourselves if any traces of this Dyke are left?' The idea presented many charms to the exploring side of our nature. It would form a kind of sporting tour, a stag hunt without the cruel end which mars all the pleasure of that excitement. So we began to make preparations by studying guide-books and seeking information, and first we went to a second-hand book-shop in Charing Cross Road and purchased a copy of Pennant's 'Tour in Wales,' a big, heavy, calf-bound volume, of which one leaf of the cover came promptly off, after the usual disagreeable habit of second-hand, calf-bound volumes!

From this valuable asset we learned much. We found that Offa's Dyke had extended from the neighbourhood of Mold in North Wales near the mouth of the Dee, to Chepstow in South Wales at the mouth of the Wye, and that certainly in Pennant's time (somewhere in the eighteenth century) a good part of it still remained in existence. But we also learned another fact which rather

disconcerted us, and that was that Offa's Dyke was not the only Dyke, but that another known by the name of Wat's Dyke, and supposed to be older in date, could be traced from the shore by Basingwerk Abbey, near Holywell, to the neighbourhood of Wrexham, and that in some portions of their course the two Dykes were quite near together.

Now this was rather an *embarras de richesse!* We had bargained for one dyke, and here was another thrown upon us right under our noses. Should we ignore Wat? But that seemed rather unkind. No! We would do our duty by him as well as by his more famous rival. Poor Wat! Nobody, either in a book or out of one, could tell us apparently anything about the person, Wat! Was he Saxon or Briton? Why did he build his Dyke? Nobody knew. He was just Wat! Whether he was King or Baron or Chieftain or Thane no one could say. His Dyke has preserved his name and nothing more. Why, why did he not carve his style and title and achievements on some massive stone and set it up for the information of posterity? The Memory of Man is too dusty and crumbling a substance to rely upon. We also began to study Anglo-Saxon and Welsh history, Sharon Turner, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' the Venerable Bede, Green's 'Making of England' for the Teuton side; and the 'Brut-y-Tywysogion,' Gildas, and

Nennius, Geoffrey of Monmouth's delightful romance, Giraldus Cambrensis, that observant Archdeacon, 'The Mabinogion,' and the 'Dictionary of National Biography' for the great personalities who rose upon our horizon, not to forget the writings of Mr. Freeman. We also bought 'Murray's Guide,' which, by the way, needs bringing up to date, being nineteen years old and not always correct in architectural detail. But our best helpers in the storm and stress of the way were the Ordnance maps. There the Dyke is marked in long, delightful stretches, and nearly always we found them easily. But all the sections covering our route were not published, and we were forced to procure smaller and inferior maps, which often led us astray and caused us to wander wearily many toilsome miles.

Thus at last we made out our route from Holywell to Chepstow, and in the following pages is a plain unvarnished story of our varying fortune, of what we sought and found—or did not find—in our tramp along King Offa's Dyke.

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THE WELSH BORDER

ITS

CHURCHES, CASTLES AND DYKES

CHAPTER I

Holywell

IT was on July the 21st, 1909, that we reached Holywell. The journey from London had been prolonged by a stay of some hours at Chester, in order to take the opportunity of seeing the Cathedral and the famous Rows, and also to visit the Walls, where we had a beautiful view of the Welsh hills. So there were two somewhat tired and depressed tourists at the Holywell station about seven o'clock in the evening, and the cold drizzling rain which was falling did not tend to cheer their spirits. The station is some distance from the little town and the road is uphill all the way, but the little motor omnibus was soon closely packed with passengers, and it was not long before we reached the cosy hostelry of Mrs. Lambert, where we proposed to spend the first few days of our holiday.

Holywell is above all things 'interesting.' There is finer scenery in Wales, plenty of it. There are statelier churches, shoals of them, but there is no spot in Wales which surpasses Holywell in living interest. Holywell is filled with sick people and cripples, who come here as to a Bethesda to be healed of their infirmities, and who, if we may believe the positive statements of eye-witnesses, are not always sent empty away.

The story of Holywell is this. In the seventh century there lived a maiden named Winefrede, the daughter of a noble lord of these parts. Her mother's brother was St. Beuno, and this Saint founded a church at Holywell and adopted his niece, who had chosen the religious life. Here they lived holy and beneficent lives. But a certain Prince Cradocus, attracted by Winefrede's beauty, paid his addresses to her. She, struck with horror, fled from him, and he, offended and enraged, pursued her and struck off her head with his sword! A speedy vengeance followed. The earth opened and swallowed up the murderer, while the head rolled down the hill and stopped near the church, and there the spring burst forth from the ground, and has never ceased to flow.

And what of the Lady? St. Beuno presently came that way. He saw the head, he saw the spring, and of course knew at once what had

happened. Picking up the head, he carried it to the corpse, deftly fitted it on, said a prayer, and there was fair Winefrede none the worse for her adventure. In fact, she lived fifteen years after, and died in Denbighshire. In the Autobiography of Sir Henry Stanley, he mentions that when a boy he spent some time at a farm called Ffynnon Beuno or St. Beuno's Wells, near the village of Tremeirchion, which, being interpreted, is 'The Maiden's Town,' so called because St. Winefrede retreated there with a company of virgins after her revivification by St. Beuno. In the reign of King Stephen her remains were translated to Shrewsbury, where a fraternity and guild were established in her honour.

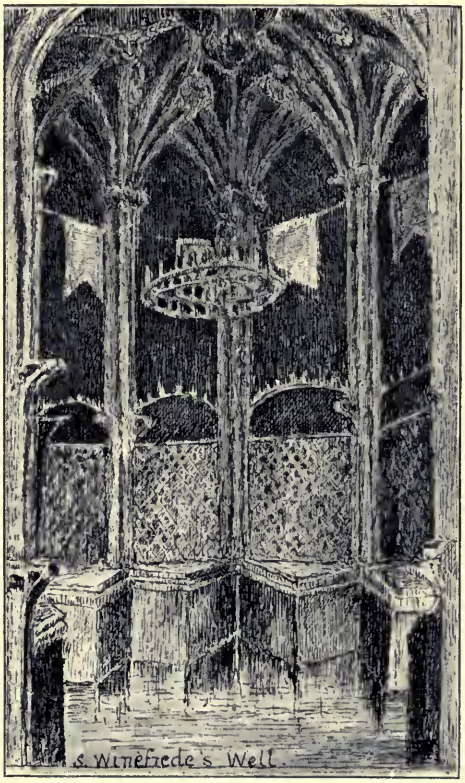
The spring has preserved its reputation and its miraculous powers from that time to the present day. The Saint distributes her favours impartially to Catholics and Protestants. In fact, one Catholic lady said to us in an aggrieved tone, 'We always think Winefrede is kinder to Protestants!'

Among donors to the Shrine are found Margaret, the mother of Henry VII, Queen Mary, Catherine of Aragon and James II, all devout Catholics, but not specially noted for their good fortune. The Well is surmounted by a beautiful Gothic Chapel, built by the aforesaid Margaret. In what may be called the undercroft of this chapel is an octagonal

enclosure, formed by eight arches most gracefully and elaborately carved and merging in a beautiful groined vaulting, and within this the spring rises. Fastened to the columns and to the walls of this under-chapel are crutches, trusses, letters, etc., memorials of the gratitude of those who have been relieved of their ailments. The water flows into an open-air tank, fitted with dressing-boxes like a swimming-bath, and here the bathers may be seen any morning, and their shrieks may be heard from the street, for the water is intensely cold, and some observers attribute the cures to the violent nervous shock experienced by the patients.

The Well and Shrine belong to the Catholics, but the Gothic Chapel above to the Established Church. This portion of the building consists of nave, apse, and small north aisle, of fine perpendicular architecture. The apse has had five large windows. Two are blocked up and through the third a door has been made, while the level of the flooring of the apse or chancel has been raised. It is not now used for service, only for meetings and Sunday School purposes, but if properly restored it would be a beautiful little building. It is said that the architect of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster borrowed his idea from this.

The present Parish Church stands behind this Chapel on the slope of the hill. All but the tower



S. WINEFREDE'S WELL.

has a very Georgian appearance, though the sexton declared it was four hundred years old. If so, it must have been wonderfully transformed, with galleries, round red pillars, and a sort of apse. There is also a large Catholic Church in the village, chiefly remarkable for a fine statue of St. Winefrede and for a relic of the Saint which is preserved there.

On July 23 we visited Basingwerk Abbey. The day was lovely, and the view over the sands of Dee, with the boats sailing over the narrow waterway and the Cheshire hills beyond, was altogether delightful. We made our way down the hill as far as the *Royal Hotel*, and then were directed to a grassy path which led to the ruins. They are very picturesquely situated, overshadowed by great elms, but so dilapidated that it is not possible for any but an expert to make out their plan. There are two Norman arches, but most of the work is Early English. There was once a castle at Basingwerk, of which there are no remains. This castle played a great part in the wars of Henry II, lying as it did on the direct road to the important fortress of Rhuddlan. It was fortified and garrisoned in 1157 by Henry II, who settled there, as an additional protection, a House of Knights Templars, but in 1165 the castle was utterly demolished by Owen Gwynedd. The date of the foundation is uncertain.

The Other One took several photographs, and then

we settled to sketch. Then, just as we were turning to leave, two men appeared who seemed to have some acquaintance with the ruins, and in answer to our questions as to where the Church had been, led us through a farm and up to a garden gate, tall and made of iron. The gate was locked, and the men cheerfully hopped over it, saying something about procuring the key, but as they did not return we imitated their method of entrance, and followed our leaders through a wilderness of giant cow-parsley, stinging-nettles, mallows and flowering grasses, to a rectangular enclosure. This is said to be the Chapel of the Knights Templars. It has beautiful windows, or what we took for windows, but they are solidly built up with stone, and with their slender pilasters had more the effect of arcading work, while the lofty wall on the other side—which looks newer—showed no sign of having been pierced for lights. The end wall also had only very narrow apertures, and we could not at all see how the chapel had been lighted. It was all exceedingly puzzling.

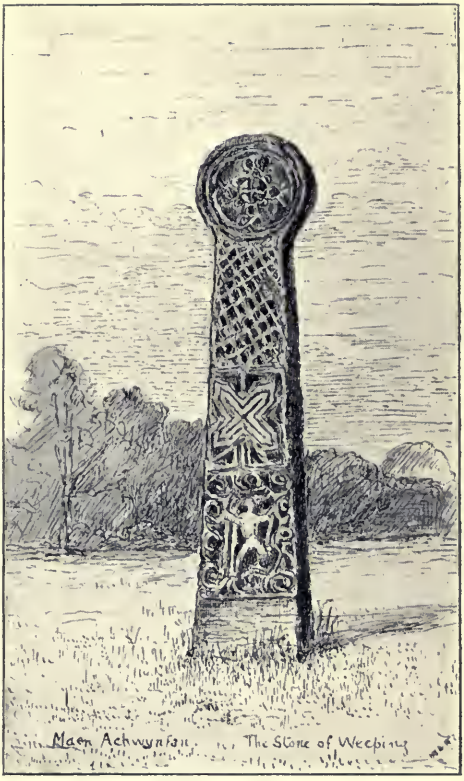
But now we turned away from the Abbey ruins and, trembling with excitement, began our search for Wat's Dyke, which according to our infallible guide, Pennant, was to be seen in his day close to Basingwerk Abbey. I think we found it, but we were not so familiar with its appearance then as we became

later, and we should like to return to Holywell to make sure of its identity.

On July 24 we spent a very interesting day. There is a fine engraving in Pennant of an ancient Celtic Cross called Maen Achwynfan, or the Stone of Weeping, and we were very anxious to see it. Most of the Holywell folk had never heard of it, but we found one righteous person, our landlady, who was able to give us such directions that finally we discovered it without much difficulty. We started for the village of Whitford, and our way lay along the St. Asaph road. Now Holywell lies on high ground, but this road scorned its level and rose steeply. The morning had been fine early, but as we began our walk, great clouds came sweeping up driven by a strong cold wind from the north-west, against which we battled valiantly. It tore at our hats, it tore at our hair, and altogether made itself very disagreeable as we trudged uphill. From the road we looked across the estuary of the Dee to Cheshire. We could see the point of land between the two rivers, with Hoylake bright in the sunshine, which fell in misty gleams over the dim, distant Lancashire coast. But more to the east, dark hills gloomed purple under piles of black clouds. It was low tide, and the sands spread dun and brown save for streaks of vivid green where the water lay in the deeper channels. Beyond Hoylake we could see the white foam of a yeasty

coloured sea beating on the sand. We fought with the wind up a long hill, and then turned down a lane where we could get a little shelter and recover breath. This led us to Whitford, which lies in a hollow. The Church was locked and did not look interesting. Even the churchyard gate was padlocked. A little further on we reached the gate leading to Mostyn Hall. We had ascertained before starting that Mostyn Hall and its treasures were not for us, as the family were in residence and not unnaturally object to be infested by stray trippers. The dame at the lodge could tell us nothing of Maen Achwynfan, but opposite to this lodge is a lane, and along this lonely lane we pursued our way till we came to a farmhouse, where we received further directions, and soon we caught sight of the monument standing in a clover field before us. We quickly made our way to it and were enthralled by its beauty and interest. It is a round-headed Cross about twelve feet high covered with elaborate carved ornament on all sides. The round head bears a Greek cross. Then comes a large section covered with an elaborate Celtic pattern. Then there are two smaller sections. The upper one contains a St. Andrew's cross, and the lower one the figure of a man fighting with a serpent, whose tail is produced into a complicated twisted border.

This stone has stood here for perhaps 1500 years,



MAEN ACHWYNFAN. The Stone of Weeping.

all memory of its founder has perished, and no one can tell of its origin. The name, Maen Achwynfan, signifies Stone of Weeping, and it has been conjectured from this that it may have been a place where penances were performed. Others suppose it to have been erected in memory of those slain in a battle fought near this spot, and support their contention by the number of tumuli containing human bones found in the neighbourhood, but these are obviously of an earlier date than the Cross, which must have been set up in Christian times. There is an old chapel, now a farmhouse, hard by which may have had some connection with the Cross.

The carving is well preserved. It is said that there was, some years ago, an attempt to remove it, but that such terrible storms of thunder and lightning ensued that it was given up. Long may the powers of the air continue their guardianship. How immeasurably do such monuments as this Cross, or the still finer one at Bewcastle, or the Roman milestone at Vindolana seen *in situ*, exceed in interest objects of the same kind arrayed and classified in a Museum, and the happy days spent in their discovery are marked with the red letter of memory.

It was hard to tear ourselves away, but we had another object in view, and even these long July days have a terrible way of coming to an end. On a neighbouring hill, the Garreg, was said to be a Roman

Pharos. We passed through a gate and over some extensive, grass-covered foundations—One said a Castle, the Other a Roman Camp. Then we entered a wood of the most glorious beeches, through which a narrow path wound round the hill with a very gradual ascent, so gradual and so prolonged that we began to despair of reaching the summit, when suddenly the Other One exclaimed that there was a telegraph pole above us! It did seem an unlikely spot for a telegraph pole, unless it were one of the Marconi kind, but presently the Tower was sighted and the telegraph pole was resolved into a flagstaff. The private opinion of us both was that the Tower was no more Roman than we were, but an inscription states that it was restored in commemoration of Queen Victoria's sixty years of Empire, so the restoration may be responsible for the un-Roman appearance. At any rate, the view is splendid from the Lancastrian hills to the range of Snowdon, and no position for a watch-tower could be better chosen.

We did not follow our circuitous path back, but walked straight down the hill and found ourselves in an unknown country, which we traversed for some distance till we met a boy, who told us we were walking in the opposite direction to Holywell. Retracing our steps we soon came to a signpost, and in due time reached Holywell, after passing through a pretty village called Lloc. The wind, so hostile in the

morning, was now at our backs and blew us along merrily, so that we were not too tired to enjoy the rest and comfort of Mrs. Lambert's hotel.

The next day was Sunday. In the afternoon we walked up the great hill behind the town, Pen Ball, and enjoyed the view. In the evening, after service at the Parish Church, we proposed to attend the Catholic torchlight procession to the Well, but alas! the rain came down in torrents and the procession was abandoned, and on Monday we had to leave. We might well have spent a longer time at Holywell. We did not visit Pantasaph or Mons Sacra, which everybody assured us was well worth a visit; but time has limits and Pantasaph is new, and our rule on our travels is that 'the old is better.' Besides, had we not come to seek for Offa's Dyke, and as yet we had not set eyes upon it? So on Monday morning we left Holywell, not without regret, and started for the ancient town of Mold, or, to give it its Welsh name, Yr Wyddgrug!

CHAPTER II

Mold

MOLD belongs to a different railway system from Holywell, so we left the train at Flint. We had a view of the old Castle, the scene of the meeting of Richard II and Bolingbroke, and then took the motor-bus for Mold. Our first care was to find a lodging, and the motor-bus settled that question for us by depositing our luggage on the pavement outside the *Black Lion*, and here we found a resting-place. The Lion does not generally entertain ladies, but he found a comfortable sitting-room for our private use, and we spent our time in Mold very happily. Mold is a pleasant town. There is a High Street, in which all the principal buildings and shops are situated, and several newer streets diverging on either side. The Church is at one end, and the road rises towards it, showing the fine proportions and lofty tower to great advantage.

Our first visit was to the Church, which is a very perfect specimen of Perpendicular architecture, consisting of a nave with two aisles without

transepts. There is a great quantity of tracery above and below the arches, and great bosses with amiable angels supporting shields, some of which bear the emblems of the Passion, and others the devices of the Stanley family. The shafts are clusters of slender pillars, and the whole effect is rich and graceful. A modern apsidal chancel has been added. The windows are large and fine, and most of them are filled with stained glass. There is one to the memory of Cecil Raikes, Postmaster-General, with an angel in each light. They are the Angel of the Annunciation, the Angel appearing to the Shepherds, the Flight into Egypt, and the Resurrection. There are two windows to members of the Eyton family. The first represents the four greater prophets, the other the four works of Mercy. Another window is to the memory of the great artist, Richard Wilson, who is buried in the churchyard. There is one old window put up by an Earl and Countess of Derby to a former vicar, bearing the Royal Arms and the Derby Arms. We also noticed an old brass to the memory of a Robert Davis, armiger, and a monumental tablet erected for himself by a Dr. Wynne, in which he states that for reasons of sanitation and decency he will not be buried within the Church, and also that, having always objected to flattery, he thus prevented any posthumous flattery of himself. He was

accordingly buried outside at the east end of the Church, and when the chancel was added his grave was of necessity included! So vain are all attempts to regulate matters for posterity. The churchyard was a tangle of flowers of every hue, marigolds, cornflowers and other brightly coloured blossoms overrunning one another in every direction.

After lunch with the *Black Lion* we started out to find Maes Garmon, the field of the Alleluia victory, fresh in our minds, as we had seen it represented a few weeks before in the London Church Pageant. This battle was fought, A.D. 420, between the Christian Britons under their bishops Germanus and Lupus, and a horde of Saxon invaders. It was during the festival of Easter and immediately after the baptism of the British converts. The bishops, their leaders, instructed their men to take shelter in a valley surrounded by hills. 'A multitude of fierce enemies appeared,' says Bede, 'whom as soon as those that lay in ambush saw approaching, Germanus, bearing in his hands the standard, instructed his men all in a loud voice to repeat his words, and the enemy advancing securely, as thinking to take them by surprise, the priests three times cried, "Alleluia!" A universal shout of the same word followed, and the hills resounding to the echo on all sides, the enemy was struck with dread, fearing that not only the neighbouring

rocks, but even the very skies, were falling upon them; such was their terror, that their feet were not swift enough to deliver them from it. They fled in disorder, casting away their arms, and well satisfied if, with their naked bodies, they could escape the danger: many of them in their precipitate and hasty flight were swallowed up by the river which they were passing. The Britons without the loss of a man beheld their vengeance complete and became inactive spectators of their victory.'

We followed this river, which could not drown a two-year-old child now, and presently came to a picturesque farm, where the lane ended. We appealed to a young man who was passing for guidance, and he, with the kindly courtesy that seems to be universal in this delightful country, volunteered to ask the mistress of the farm whether we might go through her fields. The pretty lady at once gave gracious permission, and our adviser offered to show us the way. He led us through green meadows (we saw no sign of rocks and the hills seemed a good way off) to an obelisk which commemorates the battle. We were pleased to see this monument, as, except when the struggle is in progress, a battlefield, as we have experienced to our perplexity and dismay on other occasions, is not strikingly different from any other field. Our guide informed us that the obelisk was as old

as the battle, but on reading the inscription in legible Latin, it appeared that the battle was fought in the year A.D. 420 and the monument erected in 1736! 'Who, then, were these Saxons?' asked our guide, and the question was more pertinent than it seemed to us at first, for at that time the Saxons did not possess Britain. It is certain, however, that they had made temporary invasions, and that the Romans had found it necessary to appoint an officer called the Count of the Saxon shore, to watch and guard against their approach. Our informant also told us that human bones are still found in these fields, which seems to point to the fact that the Alleluias were followed by more active exertions.

On our way back to Mold we visited the Bailey Hill, which rises abruptly at the north end of the town and to which, Pennant says, 'it owes the British and Latin names, YR WYDDGRUG and MONS ALTUS, the *lofty* or *conspicuous mount.* This is partly natural, partly artificial!' It was successively the stronghold of the Britons, Saxons and Normans, for Mold, now such a quiet peaceful little town, was in mediaeval times a very stirring place. Before the subjection of Wales by Edward I the Castle of Mold was constantly changing hands, being alternately besieged by the English and Welsh. In 1327 the lordship of Mold reverted to the Crown and was granted to the Stanley family,

in whose possession it remained until the execution of James, Earl of Derby. The Castle had been demolished long before by Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, Lord of Powys, in 1267.

The Keep, the Bailey and the Moat can all be traced, but there are no remains of building. It is now laid out as a pleasure garden, and men were playing bowls and children swinging. The view from the summit is very pleasing over a green undulating country, with Moel Famma, the highest point of the Clwydian range, rising grandly at no great distance. We find that in the time of the first Edward the country was so covered with forests that he was obliged to have a passage cut through them in order to reach Mold, and that 200 men were summoned from the Forest of Dean for this purpose.

On our way back to our inn we were once more attracted by the beauty of the Church, and great good fortune was it for us that we were so, for we found a kindly verger who showed us at the east end of the Church a lovely piece of ancient carving, which must have belonged to an older church that preceded the present edifice. He told us that it represented the Seven Ages of Man. The figures were arranged one above another in a garland of vine-leaves and grapes, but the two youngest were missing. This is partly hidden by an ugly monument to a certain Mr. Davis, represented in Roman

costume. There is a corresponding carving on the north side behind the organ, with a twining wreath supporting angels at intervals. The work reminded us of that on the Bewcastle Cross. This ended our first day at Mold, which promised to equal Holywell in interest.

The next day, July 27, we were early intent on finding the Dyke or perishing in the attempt. Inquiring in some of the better shops, we could not meet with anyone who had even heard of it, but we did meet with the section of the ordnance map referring to this district, and therein Wat's Dyke was legibly inscribed in the immediate neighbourhood of Northop. We started on the main road to Northop, which we had passed in the motor-bus coming from Flint, and presently, following our map, turned into a lane at a farm called Clwd Offa. This sounded hopeful. The lane wound its way through green fields on either side; presently we came to a stile, and there, running at right angles to the lane, was the unmistakable line of the Dyke. We were able to follow it through three fields. The most picturesque old oaks crowned it, and huge ivy stems, like giant serpents, wound round their great trunks. The Dyke rises sharply from the fields on both sides, and its artificial form cannot be mistaken.

We were in a state of rapture now. Truth to

WAT'S DYKE, NORTHOP.

say, the absolute impossibility of finding anyone who had ever seen the Dyke, or even heard of it, had begun to fill our hearts with doubt and dismay lest our quest might prove a vain one. But here it was, and finding it here we doubted not that future search would meet with like reward.

The Dyke led us into a lane, and this again into the highroad to Northop, and the comely Church tower rose before us to guide us on our way. The Church is of the same style as Mold, or rather earlier. The tower has the same pinnacles and is girt with similar ornament. The Church has two aisles and a very small chancel, apparently a later addition. There are three old monuments: one is the effigy of a fat knight without any inscription; another is of a knight in complete armour. He carries a shield bearing a cross pattée charged with five mullets. The inscription is, 'Hic jacet Ith. Vach. ap Bledd Vach.' The third is a lady and has the date 1402. She is supposed to have been a famous beauty, beloved by a Bard, who, on his return after long absence, found her lying dead. He fainted at the sight, revived, and wrote an ode upon her.

By the time we had ended our inspection it was raining with really Welsh energy, and we had to walk the three miles back to Mold very wet indeed, but more than happy to have seen so much of the Dyke. We heard afterwards that on that day

rain had fallen all over England and all over the Continent as well.

On the next day, July 28, we took an early train, and on reaching Hope station at once began to look out for the Dyke in the fields to the right of our road to Hope village. We caught sight of a hedge running in the right direction which we thought might be the object of our search, and after following its line for two fields this developed into unmistakable Dyke, with fosse complete, as we had seen it the day before at Northop. It is more overgrown with trees and bushes, which conceal its form to a certain extent, but there are bare intervals. It must run for more than a mile parallel to the road between Hope station and Hope village.

This is a beautiful country. The haymaking was in full swing, and the day perfectly bright and delightful. The view on our right hand was lovely, a broad, fertile valley stretched away to green, swelling hills, while beyond rose the wilder, higher summits of Moel Famma and other Welsh mountains. As we neared Hope, these last sank away behind the Hope Hills, lofty and rugged, and Caergwrle Castle stood up on its lofty perch just where the hills fall steeply to the valley.

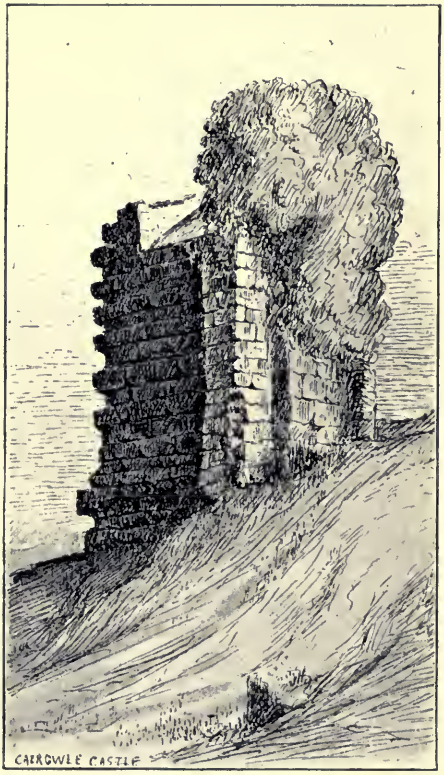
Soon we came to Hope Church, a fine building of late Early English, or Early Decorated, style. This was locked, and we had not time to hunt for the

key, so had to be satisfied with an outside view. This was a disappointment, as it contains some interesting monuments to the Trevor family. Then we came to the village nestling under the hill crowned by the imposing ruins of Caergwrle Castle. We crossed a stream by a watermill over an ancient and picturesque bridge, and climbed the steep hill to the Castle. There is an interesting account of this castle in Pennant's 'Tour.' It occupies a very important position, as the valley almost closes at this point, only leaving room for the river Alun to flow through. Pennant opines that it was first a British post, on account of the vestiges of a rampart of earth and stones and a fosse, such as are usually found in such camps. There is no doubt that it was a Roman Station, and in 1606 a hypocaust was discovered with polished tiles bearing the inscription 'Legio XX.' There are also traces of a Roman road leading in the direction of Mold. The date of the foundation of the Castle is unknown, but it is probably one of the few Welsh fortresses. Davydd, the brother of Llewelyn, last Prince of Wales, held it in the time of Edward I, and eventually was forced to surrender it to that king, who bestowed it on his beloved wife, Eleanor. Queen Eleanor lodged here on her way to Carnarvon to await the birth of her son. In the reign of Henry IV the Castle and manor were

granted to Sir John Stanley, and are still the property of that family. Very little of the building is left; we thought that the principal fragment must have been the Keep, and the Moat and outer walls are easily traced. The view is splendid, and there could have been no better day for seeing it. We tried to make a hurried sketch, and then started back to find our train at Caergwrle station, thence to Hope Exchange and Mold.

Arriving at Mold we found the cattle auction in full swing, and were tempted to look on for a while. There were hundreds of patient sheep and fewer noisy pigs, the latter far less resigned to fate than the former. We saw two calves sold, one for twenty-four shillings and another for twenty-six, and so gained some fresh knowledge as to the value of these animals, but then the Other One wanted her tea and would not stay longer, so this was the limit of our acquirements in this direction.

In Mr. Boyd Dawkin's most interesting book, 'Early Man in Britain,' he records a very curious discovery made at Mold by Mr. John Langford in 1832. 'In a burial mound near Mold,' he says, 'after removing 300 cartloads of stones, a skeleton was discovered laid at full length wearing a corslet of beautifully wrought gold which had been placed on a lining of bronze. Close by were 300 amber beads as well as traces of corroded iron. The corslet is formed



CAERGWLE CASTLE.

of a thin plate of gold three feet seven inches long, eight inches wide in the centre, and weighing seventeen oz., and is ornamented in repousse with nailhead and dotted line pattern. It is a work of Etruscan art. . . . An urn full of ashes about three yards off may have belonged to an interment of the same age. The name of the Cairn is Bryn-yi Ellyllon, goblin or fairy hill ! The place was supposed to be haunted, and before the discovery was made, a spectre clad in golden armour was said to have been seen to enter the Cairn.'

The last remark about the tradition of a ghost in golden armour having haunted the spot before the excavation took place is very singular, and one cannot help pausing to try and conjecture the origin of such a legend. Is it possible that it represents some dim recollection of the original interment passed on in this form from generation to generation ? A man buried in golden armour must have been a person of great importance : the fame of the gleaming corslet must have spread, and some strong restraint, some fear of mystic and higher powers, must have prevented the tomb being robbed and desecrated in much earlier days. How one would like to know something more about this gorgeous warrior !

The theory that this gold-bronze work belongs to Etruscan art has, I think, been modified of late years, and some scholars give Ireland as the source of much of the metal and enamel work of this age.

CHAPTER III

King Offa

EARLY history takes very much the form of biography. A great personality rises and glows in the dim chaotic past as a lighthouse among dark tumults of cloud and sea. It illuminates the men and the time about it by some inward vividness. Then comes Death and quenches its force, and often for a time there is obscurity and a noise as of surging waves and clashing conflict, but it is almost impossible to trace the thread of continuous progress till another great man rises to enlighten the period.

This is marked in Early English history. How all we know of Saxon times seems to cluster round a few names. Ethelbert, King of Kent, the friend of Augustine, Edwin of Northumberland, Alfred of Winchester, Penda and Offa of Mercia. They stand up like great pinnacles of rock among the low reefs and tumbled boulders which lie half hidden beneath the surges of forgetfulness. They are as beacons to guide us through a very dark labyrinth of confused facts.

The Mercian Kingdom was the latest formed of the Saxon Heptarchy. It was not till the end of the sixth century, Mr. Green tells us in 'The Making of England,' that the settlers in what are now the Midlands, Leicester, Nottingham, Shropshire, Staffordshire, etc., had drawn together into a kingdom, the men of the March—Mercians. They were of Engle race. They had crept down through forest and marsh along the valley of the Trent, and slowly, or quickly, for almost nothing is known of their progress, they had spread their settlements over the country. In A.D. 577 Ceawlin, King of Wessex, had defeated the Britons heavily at Deorham near Bath. Six years later he was entirely defeated at Fethanlea in Cheshire. Then later Ethelbert of Kent asserted his power, and the early kings of Mercia, Crida and Webba, apparently owned his overlordship. But in A.D. 626, Penda, son of Webba, became King and the fortunes of Mercia rose. He was a strong man, a great warrior, a fierce heathen. He fought against Northumbria and slew the great King Edwine at the battle of Hatfield. He managed to get on friendly terms with some party among the Britons, and Briton and Saxon fought side by side against King Oswald of Northumberland at Heavenfield by the Roman Wall, and where too Prince Cadwallon, a descendant of Maelgwyn, King of the Britons, was slain. It was Penda who later defeated and slew

King Oswald at Maserfeld, now Oswestry, in Shropshire. At another time we hear of him besieging the fortress at Bamborough, 'the royal city,' Bede tells us, 'which has its name from Bebba, formerly its queen. Not being able to enter it by force—he endeavoured to burn it; and having destroyed all the villages in the neighbourhood of the city, he brought to it an immense quantity of planks, beams, wattles and thatch, wherewith he encompassed the place to a great height on the landside, and when the wind set upon it, he fired the mass designing to burn the town. At that time the most reverend Bishop Aidan resided in the island of Farne, which is nearly two miles from the city, for thither he was wont often to retire to pray in private that he might not be disturbed. When he saw the flames of fire and smoke carried by the boisterous wind above the city walls, he is reported, with eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, to have said, "Behold, Lord, how great mischief Penda does." Which words were hardly uttered when the wind, immediately turning from the city, drove back the flames on those who kindled them, so that some being hurt and all frightened, they forbore any further attempts against the city, which they perceived was protected by the hand of God.' But at last Penda too met his fate, and died, as he probably wished to die, fighting against his enemies in a great battle with the Northumbrians near the river Winward.

Then for a time fortunes are uncertain. The tide of success, of aggression, of defeat sways to and fro. There are various kings, one of whom, Ethelred, retires to a monastery. But at last Offa succeeded to the throne of Mercia.

As one pursues the career of King Offa through the old Chronicles, he begins to take shape and loom large in the hazy atmosphere of those distant days. He must have been a strong, ambitious man, a warrior, a statesman, a devout son of the Church, though the instincts of the savage, the barbarian, were by no means refined away. Bishop Stubbs speaks of him as the most important of the monarchs of his time save Charlemagne himself, with whom Offa corresponded, though at times the friendship suffered temporary eclipse.

Offa came of the royal line of Woden and was descended from a brother of Penda. He ascended the throne when the Mercian power was suffering some loss. Ethelbald, his predecessor, had been defeated and probably killed at the battle of Burford and the supremacy lost. Then, after a year's chaos, Offa became King.

For fourteen years nothing is heard of Offa, and then he appears as a conqueror over a mysterious people called the Hestingi! Some authorities rather rudely ascribe bad spelling to the scribe who records the fact, and say he meant the East

Angles. Others aver that this people were the founders of the town of Hastings. If they are right, Offa must have penetrated the great Forest of Sussex. But later he fought a great battle at Otford, a Kentish village, beloved now by artist and antiquarian, and where there is a famous well dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, which bears a strong resemblance to a Roman bath, and where, in a hopfield adjoining, fragments of Roman tiles can be picked up. This victory gave Offa the overlordship of Kent, and by another at Bensington in Oxfordshire he won all the territory of Wessex which lay north of the Thames. Thus the Mercian Kingdom became a solid block—for he gained the overlordship of East Anglia and the East Saxons—between the Severn and the North Sea and the rivers Thames and Humber, with Kent beyond at the south-east.

It is between the years A.D. 776 and 780 that the Chronicles record the struggles between Mercia and Wales that specially interest us. The 'Brut-y-tysogion,' the Red Book of Hergest, under the date A.D. 776, records, 'Then the destruction of the South Wales men by King Offa took place,' and in A.D. 780 'King Offa spoiled the Britons in the summertime.' But another MS. gives a slightly different version of what happened. 'In the summer,' it runs, 'the Welsh devastated the

territory of Offa, and then Offa caused a Dyke to be made as a boundary between him and Wales to enable him more easily to withstand the attack of his enemies, and that is called Offa's Dyke from that time to this day. And it extends from one sea to the other, from the South near Bristol to the North.'

Perhaps the magnitude of this work gives one the best idea of the power and wealth of the man who ordered its construction. It was not the work, it could not be the work, of a petty chieftain or even of a kinglet! The Welsh, a fierce and warlike people, were driven back by Offa from land they had hitherto occupied as their natural right. Their capital, Pengwern, was captured and became a leading city of the Mercians, changing its name to Shrewsbury, and in the face, one would imagine, of hot opposition this great Dyke was constructed. Who made it, who surveyed the land and drew the line for its foundation, who superintended the army of workmen who constructed it? For it is no small affair, that Dyke! It must have been some hundred miles in length, and after eleven centuries parts of it are still from twelve to fifteen feet in height. Being solely an earthwork, the rains, and snows, and frosts of more than a thousand years surely must have worn it down and washed it away. But there it is still,

great stretches of it, overgrown with trees, pierced and mined by millions of rabbits, a track for country feet, a boundary between common fields, much of it truly quite destroyed, and most of it forgotten,—it is still a silent witness to the power of that great old Saxon King.

But Offa's fame was not confined to England. He was known on the Continent as a powerful ruler. Pope Adrian I writes to Charlemagne alluding to a rumour that that monarch and the King of the English were hatching some plot to depose him and set up a German Pope. The Pontiff declares his willingness and pleasure to receive the Saxon ambassadors. Charlemagne asks for a daughter of Offa as a wife for his son, and then gets offended because Offa, in return, asks for a daughter of Charlemagne for his son. This the great Frankish King thinks is claiming too great an equality, and there is a tiff between the two monarchs which it takes all the efforts of Alcuin and other wise men to smooth over. But it was smoothed over, and later a sort of early commercial treaty regulating the export and import of goods was arranged between England and the Continent.

Offa was a devout Churchman. His charters and gifts to churches and monasteries are very numerous. One to St. Peter's at Westminster is

especially interesting. 'The earliest document which refers to the Abbey,' says Sir Walter Besant in his 'History of Westminster,' 'is a conveyance by Offa, King of Mercia, of a manor called Aldenham to "St. Peter and the people of the Lord dwelling in Thorney," that "terrible"—i.e. sacred place which is called Westminster.' The date is A.D. 785. Was it to that Church which St. Peter himself had come to hallow that this gift was made?

Offa had also a scheme in his mind for raising the see of Lichfield to the dignity of an Archbishopric, and the Pope was not averse to the proposal, and sent two Legates to arrange the matter, but the change only lasted during the King's life.

Offa also took an interest in his coinage. His silver pennies are said to be the best and most interesting of the coins of the period of the Heptarchy.

But on Offa's memory lies one dark stain of treachery and murder. There are different versions of the tale, but that Ethelberht, King of East Anglia, was foully done to death at Offa's court seems unquestionable. The story, which sounds as if it ought to begin with 'once upon a time,' is as follows: Ethelberht, the son of King Ethelred and Leoveronica, his wife, succeeded to his father's throne. He was a very pious young man and

would have preferred a religious life, but his wise men assured him that it was his duty to marry and provide an heir for the throne. So he consented to court Altrida, the daughter of Offa, and started off on his wooing, although his mother was against the plan. On his journey an earthquake occurred and an eclipse, which ought to have warned him of coming danger, but apparently he neglected these adverse signs. Arrived at 'Villa Australis,' where Offa was residing, he met Altrida, who seems to have fallen in love with him at once, and unwisely declared her opinion that her father ought at once to acknowledge Ethelberht's supremacy. This displeased her mother—as it very naturally might—and she poisoned Offa's mind against his intended son-in-law, and he accepted the offer of one Grimbald to assassinate the young man. Poor Ethelberht was invited to an interview with the King and there bound and beheaded. His body was at first hurriedly buried 'by the bank of the river Lugg,' which, by the way, gives one a clue to the position of 'Villa Australis.' On the third night the Saint (he has now reached that honour) appeared to a certain nobleman named Brithfrid, and bade him to take up his body and carry it to a certain place named Stratus-way. As he and one of his friends, in obedience to the vision, were fulfilling this command,

the head fell out of the cart in which they were conveying the corpse and healed a blind man! Finally they buried the body at Furley, the present Hereford.

There is a variant of the story which is presented by the 'St. Alban's Chronicle,' in which Offa's wife is made not only the instigator but the author of the murder. She invited the young man into her chamber, where she had prepared a seat over a pit, and asking Ethelberht to sit down and await Altrida he fell into the pit and was there slain by guards she had stationed for the purpose. But it has been suggested that this account was inspired by a desire on the part of the St. Alban's scribe to clear their founder's memory of so dark a stain. It is a very ancient masculine device, and reminds one of the old historic speech: 'The woman tempted me and I did eat!'

Reading between the lines, there seems little doubt that the motive of the crime arose from that ambition for the overlordship that was strong in the hearts of those Saxon kings. But the cold-blooded treachery of the deed, and its betrayal of the laws of hospitality, seems to have shocked the public opinion of even those rough days, while the piety of the young King aroused all its religious sympathy. Offa repented of his crime, and in token thereof built and endowed the Abbey of St. Alban.

He gave much land, too, to Hereford Cathedral, of which his victim became the patron Saint. Also, he took the journey to Rome to seek expiation from the Pope himself. This journey has been doubted; but whether he went or no—one hopes he did—he made that promise of the annual sum of 365 silver pennies to maintain certain lights in St. Peter's, and for the relief of the poor, which developed into the 'Peter's pence' of later days.

Offa died in 796. There is no certain record of his burial-place, but some say that he was interred at Bedford. A certain regret springs up in the mind that the great King's bones do not rest within those ancient walls which he raised in penitence and prayer.

CHAPTER IV

Wrexham

ON July 29 we left Mold and came to Wrexham. We passed over the ground visited the day before, and could see the Dyke plainly from the train. On the hills round Wrexham great collieries send up their tall, smoking chimneys, but Wrexham itself is a pleasant and lively town.

The Church is one of the Seven Glories of Wales, and well deserves its reputation, so, after finding rooms at the *Imperial Hotel*, we started to discover it, and were soon aware of its splendid tower rising at the end of the High Street. It is approached through old iron gates. The Church was founded in the fourteenth century, but the chancel, clerestory and a new roof were added in the fifteenth century, and the tower in 1506. The rafters of the original roof rose from very fine bosses, which are still left. These are the heads of a knight, a lady, a monk and others, all finely carved. The rafters of the present roof also rest on bosses, and these are at a higher level than the others, so that they form a double row.

The Church consists of a nave and two aisles, and has no transepts. This plan of building is generally found in the churches of this district. The fine churches at Mold and Northop both followed this pattern. There is an old monument of a knight in armour, which was found in the churchyard and is now placed upright in the Church. There is also a monument in the chancel to Bishop Bellot. The stained-glass windows are modern and very fine. Three of these are by Kempe and two by Clayton and Bell. The three former represent our Lord's works of mercy and incidents in the life of St. Peter. One of the Clayton-Bell windows represents the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the west window, the finest of all, shows the warrior saints St. Giles, the Black Prince, St. David, St. Michael and St. Daniel. There was a very courteous and intelligent verger who showed us an elegant gold—or silver-gilt—chalice of pre-Reformation date, and another very large silver one. He also directed us to an old monument at the east end erected to the memory of Sir Richard Davies, who was governor of Holt Castle, and who received Charles I there, which circumstance is recorded in the inscription. The brass lectern dates from the sixteenth century. The font is very handsome, octagonal, bearing on its sides the emblems of the Passion, the Welsh dragon and the portcullis.

This was found at Acton Park, where it was used as a trough. On the outside of the tower there are figures in niches very well preserved.

After lunch we spent some time looking for a portion of the Dyke which is marked on the ordnance map, but which we were unable to find. The proximity of a flourishing and ever-growing town is not favourable to the preservation of ancient landmarks. So we abandoned that part of our quest and sought another piece, taking a road which followed the course of the River Blackwater, which ran in a deep ravine below us. At one point there was a great brick factory. The red buildings, tall chimneys and heaps of bricks stood out against a background of dense, dark wood. In front was a deep ravine. Under the black clouds of a stormy sky the whole presented a wonderfully effective and Turneresque picture. A little farther on we came to a lane which led us down a steep slope to the river and across a bridge. We ascended the hill on the opposite side, passed an old mill, and presently turned to the left. The lane still followed the course of the river, though again high above it. At last, in a field between us and the stream, we caught sight of something that seemed to be Dyke; but the field was effectively protected by a thick hedge and barbed wire, so we went to a farmhouse and asked to be allowed to enter the field. A pretty

girl answered that she would ask the master, and permission was readily granted. As the maiden escorted us through the yard we asked her if she knew anything of Wat's Dyke. She did not, but would ask the master, who came at her call and told us what we had already guessed, that a portion of it ran through the field below. We found it without much difficulty, though it was not so well defined as the portions at Northop and Hope. Returning to the farm we asked its name, and, after some attempts on our part to reproduce the guttural sounds, the maiden volunteered to write it down, when it appeared as *Llett-y-rroes*, signifying the 'Home of the Nightingale'! It appeared, however, that no nightingale had been heard there within human memory! Then, somewhat worn out in body and mind, we asked whether there might not be a nearer way back to Wrexham, and were told that by proceeding in the same direction we should in due time reach the *Holly Bush Inn*, which is close to Cefn-y-Bedd station, so we pursued the way in faith, and in due time came to the inn, and also to the station. We found that there would be a train in half an hour and also that we were four miles from Wrexham, so determined to wait, though the stalwart youth at the station told us that he had often walked the distance in three-quarters of an hour. In answer to our inquiry if tea could be

obtained, he replied that he thought not, but that we might ask for it at the *Holly Bush*; so we did ask, and not only asked but obtained. Delicious tea served in a beautiful kitchen, with a beautiful old Welsh dresser, and a beautiful baby and a perfectly charming hostess, who told us that the house had been occupied by her family for two hundred years. When we mentioned the Dyke her husband appeared and showed interest in the subject, concerning which he was well informed. He showed us a fine edition of ' Dugdale ' he had bought at a sale. But we had to tear ourselves away to catch the train, and reached Wrexham in pouring rain, glad that we had not followed our stalwart friend's advice and attempted the four-mile walk in three-quarters of an hour !

On the next day we made an early start, with a sandwich in each pocket, and took the train to Ruabon. On reaching this dingy little town we took a road leading in a westerly direction crossing the River Afon, and soon saw the Dyke running at right angles to the road. This was a thrilling moment, for this was our first sight of Offa's Dyke. All the sections we had seen up to the present time were portions of Wat's Dyke, which runs parallel to Offa's Dyke, and near Ruabon is only five hundred yards away from it. Offa's Dyke is higher, straighter and altogether finer than the other. The origin of Wat's Dyke is unknown. If it is of greater

antiquity, it would inevitably be more wasted by weather than its more famous companion.

As soon as we saw the Dyke in this place we recognised its superiority. It rose up over twelve feet high, with a footpath along the top and fine trees growing from it in a straight, unswerving line that recalled the Roman Wall. We followed it through fields, then crossed a road and passed through a gate which led to the great Wynnstay collieries. The Dyke ran beside the path right up to the entrance, straight and high and still crowned with trees. But its surface was quite bare, and the trees were dead skeletons, all vegetation being destroyed by the deadly black smoke of the colliery. It looked like one of Doré's illustrations of the 'Inferno.'

We had some talk with a boy who told us that he worked in the mine. His time was from 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. His father had been a Presbyterian minister, so it seemed as if the family fortunes had declined. We turned back and sat down on the grass to sketch the Dyke, and were presently accosted by a young man who seemed anxious to impart information about himself. His vocation was to look after the electric lighting of the mine, being employed by a Leeds firm. He told us that 1100 men were employed in this mine, but that it was not the largest; at the Afon works 1800 men were employed.

A slight shower stopped our drawing, and we walked on to Moreton, where Offa's Dyke is again marked on the map. We recrossed the Afon and again met our talkative friend. He showed us his pretty, white cottage on the bank of the stream, for which he pays three shillings a week, with a large garden running down to the river. He told us that the produce of this garden paid his rent. Two dear little fair-haired children came running to greet their daddy, and it was pleasant to meet with one so obviously content with his life, and apparently with every reason for being so.

We came to Moreton, but the colliery works seemed to have obliterated the Dyke; at any rate, we could not find it. So we turned away, crossed the railway at Hafod station, and walked on till we crossed the little Black Brook. On the other side of the brook we came to Wat's Dyke, clear and unmistakable, and followed it for a long way through fields where it formed the boundary. It led us over a hill from which we had a splendid view. In the last field the Dyke no longer formed the boundary, but ran away from the hedge a high grassy mound. Now we approached the highroad, so we turned along a footpath which led us to Ruabon close to the Church. But we had not time to inspect it then; that was reserved for another day.

CHAPTER V

Llangollen

WE left Wrexham on Saturday morning, July 31, rather sorry to quit our comfortable quarters at the *Imperial Hotel*, but looking forward with some eagerness to the next two or three days. We had decided to forsake the direct line of our Dyke for the week-end, and plunge a little into the land of mountains and mystery which lies to the west of that ancient Barrier. We were bound for Llangollen to stay over Bank Holiday, which fell this year on August 2. As we travelled by crowded trains to Ruabon, and then to Llangollen, we began to wonder what would be our fate with regard to accommodation, for we felt sure every hotel would be crowded, and we had neglected to write for rooms. But by good fortune we fell in with a charming lady in the train who told us of apartments where we should be well done by. So very soon we were comfortably settled with kind Mrs. Edwards, of Lendon House. Llangollen is a charming spot—a little town clustered about the

rushing Dee just where the mountains open a little towards the mouth of the valley. For the bridge which here crosses the tumultuous stream Pennant assigns John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, as founder: he died in 1357. It is said to be one of the Three Beauties of Wales. Whether the present structure is the same as the good Bishop built I do not know, but from it the view up the dark, rushing river is very charming. To the left rise the Berwyn hills, to the right is seen Dinas Brân on its conical mount with ranges of heights beyond it, while before you is a mystery of wooded hills and mountains, out of which pours the sacred river. We had been told that we ought to see Corwen, and as the Saturday afternoon was the only time we could spare for the expedition, we took the train for that place as soon as we had settled in at our rooms and had lunch. The railway runs by the side of the Dee and the valley is narrow, so that there seemed only room for the road between the river and the wooded hills; but as you approach Corwen the mountains retire a little, and there is a stretch of meadow on either side of the more tranquil stream. The little town is on the left hand as you journey up the line, and is a dull little place which may at some time have been quaint, but has been modernised in a dismal, slaty fashion which at first strikes one as depressing in the extreme.

It stands close under the hills, and we were told that once those are ascended beautiful moors stretch away before you.

The Church is old and very interesting. There is an ancient Norman chancel with its three little round-headed windows, and the nave pillars have large square abaci with a bold, almost Ionic, curve below. In the north chancel wall, under a low arch, there is a most curious old monument to one Jorwerth Sulien, sometime priest of the Church. He lies as in his coffin. His head and shoulders, and his hands clasping a chalice, are visible, then a piece of stone, as if part of the coffin lid, hides the rest of the body save the feet. Round this portion of coffin lid runs an inscription, but the centre is carved to represent the chasuble. It was too dark in the Church, for the afternoon was cloudy and gloomy, to read the inscription, especially as the monument is low down on the floor. Pennant gives it as 'Hic jacet Jorwerth Sulien. Vicarius de Corvaen, ora pro eo,' and says: 'The whole is a very elegant piece of engraving—I fear not old enough to make it the tomb of St. Julien, archbishop of St. David, the godliest man and greatest clerke in all Wales (he died in 1089), yet that saint has his well here and is patron of the church.' In the churchyard is an old Celtic Cross. The circle at the top is partly broken away, but still shows the

design of an interlaced cross. On the upright stone is carved what is said to be Owen Glendower's Dagger, which he threw at somebody or something. It also bears a strong resemblance to a 'Cross fitchée'! An old stone built in as a lintel to the priest's door has the same device. The base of the Cross is rudely circular, and has two or three cup-holes which have been thought to signify that the monument is more ancient than Christianity, and was used in pagan blood sacrifices, either human or animal. But the question also arises as to whether these cavities may not have been for offerings for the underground gods—the strong gods who pushed up the corn and the fruit trees, as the sky gods watered and ripened them. Need they necessarily signify blood offerings?

In the churchyard are some curious tomb-stones with semi-circular holes for the knees of friends who came to pray. These stones bore inscriptions dating early in the eighteenth century. Do they mean that the kindly and human custom of praying for the dead had continued in ultra-Protestant Wales to as late a date as 1715?

After we had explored the Church we set off to walk to Caer Drewyn, an ancient British Camp on a hill which rises on the further side of the river. But the clouds which had been gathering gloomily now began to discharge their contents, and so, fearing

also lest the time would not permit our going so far, we beat a retreat to the station. But we were sorry to miss Caer Drewyn : it has historic as well as prehistoric interest. The guide-books tell you that Owen Glendower collected his forces there ; but once a previous Owen made it his headquarters. Owen, or, as some write it, Owain, Gwynedd was King of North Wales when Henry II was attempting, with all the vigour of his fierce and tenacious nature, to conquer Wales. The Norman king had been foiled in an attempt to proceed along the coast by Basingwerk and Rhuddlan. He had had to retreat, much to his disgust, and in 1165 he had determined on another campaign. Henry collected his forces at Oswestry. Mercenaries from Normandy and Flanders, Angevins and Gascons, mingled with the English levies. No doubt the good people of Oswestry had a lively time.

Against this powerful array Owain gathered his army at Corwen, and for once the various Welsh princes made common cause. Owain became reconciled with his brother Cadwallader : there had been a quarrel between the two because Cadwallader in an excited moment had murdered Anarawd, the son of the Prince of South Wales, who was to have married Owain's daughter. With Owain was also Owen Cyveiliog, the Prince of Powys, and a poet into the bargain, and the Lord Rhys ap Griffith,

who now was the most powerful ruler in southern Wales, and seems to have been a brother of the murdered Anarawd.

Henry was seeking to conquer the most difficult part of Wales. He wanted to overrun Gwynedd, that is, the district of Snowdon, the modern Carnarvon and Merioneth. If he could penetrate those mountain fastnesses, and defeat Owain on his own ground, he thought he should indeed be master and hold the reins firmly over these troublesome, elusive Welshmen. Henry did not proceed by the valley of the Dee. His idea was to march up the more open vale of the Ceiriog and then cross the Berwyn hills towards Snowdon. Remembering the worry he had had before in the woods of North Wales, he sent on a body of men to cut down the trees. At this work he was attacked, and the fight was fierce but indecisive, so that the Welsh retired again to Corwen. Henry pressed on, and at last his troops were encamped on the Berwyn hills. It must have been somewhere near to Chirk Castle. But here—alas for Henry's plans—the weather changed! If the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, the storms and clouds fought against Henry. It began to rain as it can rain in Wales. Provisions began to fail, and supplies were cut off by Owain's vigilance. At last King Henry was forced to retreat and retire along the Dee to Chester. And in a grand

Plantagenet rage he caused some unfortunate young hostages who were in his power to be blinded and otherwise cruelly used.

As the train wound down the valley in the gloom of evening and of pouring rain, and one thought on what scenes of horror those mournful mountains must have witnessed, an unusual satisfaction with the twentieth century took possession of one's spirit. What are the manners and customs of a few murdering motorists compared with those of the gentlemen of those good old times? What are a few battues of pheasants or the chase of the stag and the fox to the human slaughter which was the greatest joy of the gallant nobles of the age of chivalry? Of course, these minor matters mean that the lust for blood is not yet extinct in the human heart, but how modified and watered down! The Welsh chieftains seem to have been especially given to general scrimmaging. If they had no national war on hand they fought most cheerfully among themselves for a little diversion. Especially brothers had merry times of tussle. For primogeniture did not prevail: the male heirs inherited equally, and if there were several sons, as soon as the father was dead, they all went for one another till the weaker went to the wall and the conqueror reigned alone. Giraldus Cambrensis, in his description of Wales, after enlarging on this trait in the

character of his countrymen, continues thus: 'It is also remarkable that brothers show more affection to one another when dead than when living: for they persecute the living even unto death, but revenge the deceased with all their power.' Human nature is a queer compound!

The next morning proved very wet, but we dutifully paddled through the mud to church. The singing was good, but there was no sermon, as there was midday Celebration. So we paddled back again and had our dinner. At first the afternoon looked hopeless. Rain was streaming down as it streamed on poor old Plantagenet Henry and his knights some seven hundred years ago. Poor old things, how uncomfortable they must have been! How draggled their waving plumes must have become, and how the water must have run in at the joints of their harness and trickled down into their boots! Those iron pots must have held pints—and they had no waterproof coats!

But about three o'clock the clouds lightened a little, and we determined to attempt the ascent of Dinas Brân. Crossing the bridge, we paused a minute to watch the strong rush and flow of the river. The water was very dark, and we remembered that we had read that the Welsh name signified Blackwater. Pennant doubts this derivation, and fancies it comes from another word signifying

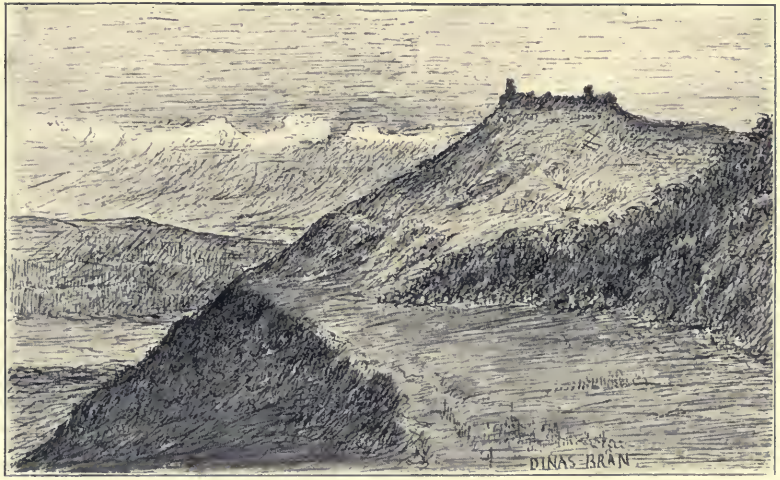
divine. For all are agreed that the Dee has always been a sacred river. Spenser tells us that in the great River Procession came the

> 'Dee, which Britons long ygone,
> Did call divine, that doth by Chester tend.'

And long before Spenser's time Giraldus informed us that the river foretold coming events by changes in its fords and currents.

Beyond the Dee we had to cross the canal bridge, and so on up a footpath which led over fields and past two or three houses to the open hill. On one side a firwood climbs the slope, but the greater part is covered with fine turf and bracken and gorse; but we saw no heather. From a point just above the unenclosed part, the cone of the hill rises very steeply—so steeply, indeed, as to suggest that it is not wholly natural—and it is a stiff though short climb to the summit. As you mount up a view of wild mountain land opens before you, which must be very lovely on a clear day; it was grand and gloomy now under the heavy clouds which came sweeping up, brushing even the lower hills with their ragged fringes. Beyond, you look across to the Eglwseg rocks, which are of a light reddish tint with parallel lines of strata, very different to the grey, slaty stone on which we stood.

On the summit we came to the ruins of Castell



DINAS BRAN

Dinas Brân—by some called Crow Castle. But Pennant speaks thus:

'This was one of our primitive Welsh Castles. The founder is unknown. I dare not attribute its origin and name to Brennus, King of the Gauls, who besieged the Capitol and who is fabled to have come into these parts to fight his brother Belinus [early Welsh customs again], nor yet do I derive it from Bryn, a hill, nor Bran, a crow, but from the mountain river Brân, that runs down by its side.'

Whoever chose the site of that castle chose it well for purposes of defence. Its ruins cover nearly the whole summit of the hill, which rises steeply except at one point, and there a deep fosse protected the approach. A good part of the outer walls, two arches of what we fancied might have been the chapel, and some inner partitions and narrow passages are all that remain of what must have been an extensive and stately building. It was at one time the chief seat of the Lords of Jâl or Yale, and perhaps may have been founded by one of them. We were to meet with that name again, as we had before at Wrexham. In the time of Henry III it was the retreat of Gryffydd ap Madoc, who, in the changeable Welsh manner, seesawed between alliance with the English and his own people. Doubtless he required a strong fortress to retire to at times. When this gentleman

died I suppose he was in with the English, as his sons (or grandsons, as some say) became the wards of the English King. He gave the care of the eldest boy to John, Earl of Warren, and the younger to Roger Mortimer—the Roger Mortimer of Chirk—and the warders arranged matters so that soon 'All smiles ceased' under the dark waters of Dee beneath the bridge of Holt! Then the lands of the unhappy lads passed to their guardians. But later it is said that remorse seized the heart of Earl Warren. There was a third son, Gryfydd Vychan, and for him the repentant Earl obtained the grant of this part of his hereditary possessions in 1282. Owen Glendower was descended from this restored heir. But there are some less tragic reminiscences connected with this lonely ruin. Once beauty dwelt here and looked out of the Castle windows on these mountains and woods. 'In 1390,' Pennant tells us, 'this castle was inhabited by a celebrated beauty, descended from the house of Tudor Trevor, and whose father probably held the castle under the Earls of Arundel. The name of the lady was Myfanwy Vechan: she made a conquest of Howel ap Einion Lygliw, a celebrated bard who composed an ode addressed to her.' Pennant kindly gives a translation of the poem, from which we gather some particulars as to the fair lady's appearance. She had dark eyes,

'as black as sloes,' which vied with 'the arches of her brows.' She was fairer than the cherry's bloom, whiter than the curling wave of Dee. She wore scarlet robes of state, and the bright ringlets of her hair were finer than the spider's thread that glitters on the dewy mead, and her smiles were harder to obtain than to gain the steep ascent to her dwelling. Her castle is spoken of as 'Myfanwy's marble tow'rs.'

> 'Thy name the echoing vallies round,
> Thy name a thousand hills resound.
> Myfanwy Vechan, maid divine!
> No name so musical as thine.'

Poor Howel! He was evidently in a bad way; but we are grateful to him for casting a ray of sweetness and poetry on this grey and gloomy spot. But now the rain was beginning in earnest again. A grey curtain of cloud drooped lower and lower till all view was hid, and we hurried home to shelter and to tea. But we virtuously went to church again in the evening, and were rewarded by a good and vigorous sermon preached by a young man, dark, short, and most evidently a Welshman.

CHAPTER VI

Valle Crucis

ON the Monday morning we found to our joy that the rain had ceased. The weather certainly looked doubtful, but, then, what is the use of minding that in Wales. There is always one chance that it may be fine if there are nine the other way. So we started off for Valle Crucis.

We found the streets of Llangollen already thronged with holiday-makers, and many more were pouring in by the frequent trains, but we soon left the crowds behind as we trudged along the Ruthin road. After a while we saw a little gate giving entrance to a field, and a signpost by it bore the welcome inscription 'To the Abbey'! Soon we were at the entrance of the monastic ruin, where a quaint old clergyman, a Mr. Owen, received our sixpences, the price of admission, with evident satisfaction, and handed us over to his wife, who took us round the Church in a rather perfunctory way, and then darted off to interview other arriving sixpences.

The Abbey stands in a green valley sheltered by

lofty hills, some of which are well wooded. You enter by a fine doorway at the west end of the Church. Three beautiful windows pierce the wall above, with a rose window in the gable. The roof is all gone, and most of the nave pillars are broken away, but under the cross of the nave and transepts six old tombs have been pieced together. One is that of a niece of Prince Llewelyn, another of Myfanwy the beautiful, who married Howel, son of Owen Gwynedd. This could not be, we are afraid, the poet's Myfanwy, because of dates—dates which destroy so many pleasing romances. The south transept adjoins the sacristy, and here the building retains some of its roofing. Passing through a fine Norman doorway, we entered what had been the cloisters, now all destroyed. Next to the door is a great window with flamboyant tracery, and then you arrive at the entrance to the Chapter House, which has been restored. It has a vaulted roof supported on pillars without capitals, the lines of the moulding running up into the roof vaulting. In the cloister garth is a Wishing Well. The ceremony to be pursued is to kneel down with your knees on two separate stones, and hold a penny just on the surface of the water while you silently record your wish. Then let go your penny, and if it falls head up at the bottom of the Well your wish will be granted. Our desires therefore ought to be given us, for our pennies fell with

King Edward's face smiling at the skies. One wish, however, has not been fulfilled yet !

Beyond the Chapter House doorway a narrow staircase led up to the dormitory. This is roofed in, for this part of the building was occupied as a farm-house fifty years ago. The little trefoil windows are in good condition. A large window at the end gaped bare of all tracery. On the floor were some ancient sculptured gravestones, one with part of an inscription to Prince Madoc of Dinas Brân. How they got up here is a mystery, and they cannot be removed to a more suitable spot for fear of pulling the whole place down. In a smaller apartment was another broken carved stone, a cross and a design of leaves with a hand grasping the stem.

We descended the stairs, and then made our way round by a covered slype into a garden, and beyond it was a fishpond in which the east end of the Abbey Church, with its three long lancet windows, was reflected, making a charming picture. Returning to the main building, we fell in with a friend whom we had not seen for two or three years, and who was making holiday like ourselves. We also had a chat with the old clergyman, who informed us that Valle Crucis had been at first a Benedictine Abbey ; then the Cistercians came, who built the Church as it remains. These good monks were turned out by Owen Glendower, who burnt part of the Abbey, and

later it was occupied by Spanish Dominicans, who made the Chapter House into the Refectory. But, according to Pennant, 'it was founded in 1400 by Madoc ap Gryffydd Maelor, Lord of Bromfield, for the Cistercians. Two of the Abbots, Dafydd ap Jeven Jerwerth, and Icon or John, were celebrated by the Bard, Guttun Owain, who flourished about the year 1480. He highly commends their hospitality: speaks of their having four courses of meat, bright silver dishes, claret, etc. Guttun does not forget the piety of the house and is particularly happy in being blessed by Abbot John with his three fingers covered with rings.'

We then started off to walk up the Pass going over to Ruthin. At a little distance from Valle Crucis we came to the Pillar of Eliseg, a very ancient inscribed stone cross standing on a tumulus. It was entire till, unfortunately, some of the Commonwealth soldiers passed that way, and, thinking it superstitious, threw it down and broke it. The inscription is now illegible, but by good luck it was copied before it was too late by a Mr. Edward Llwyd, an early antiquary. The stone was dedicated to one Concenn, a grandson of Brochmail Ysgithrog, who was defeated in the battle of Chester in A.D. 607. Eliseg seems to have been his great-grandfather. In the tumulus, when opened, bones were found lying between some flat stones.

We chose the old road up the Pass, which, though steeper, is more picturesque, and very beautiful the scenery is as you ascend between great hills, some bare, some wooded, with deep valleys dividing them. On our way we passed a small village, some fifteen or twenty houses, but we noticed that it was furnished with two chapels, one of which called itself Calvinistic Methodist ! We could not help discussing the social aspects of such religious division in so small a community. Did the two congregations call upon one another ? Did they accept each other's invitations to tea ? The Calvinist creed is strong and definite, and it would be so odd to drink the tea and eat the muffins of those whom you believed to be doomed to eternal perdition !

As we neared the summit of the Pass the trees ceased, and the hills were bossed with heather and bracken. At last the outlook reminded us of a Swiss Pass—bare green knolls and mounds, while a dark, heather-clad mountain rose on our right hand which we believed to be Cyern-y-Brain. Over this we wanted to pass and make our way back by the Eglwseg rocks. At the summit of the Pass we sat down by the wayside to rest and eat our sandwiches. We ought to have seen Snowdon, but the clouds hung low, and though we could distinguish Moel Famma and the Clwydian range, the greater mountains were shrouded in mystery. A motor

came buzzing along, and then some pedestrians arrived. These were followed by an empty brake, whose occupants had been evidently bidden to walk up the hill to save the horses, for some ten or twenty gentlemen came panting up the ascent. One of the last of these was very angry, and kept shouting to the driver to stop in language more forcible than elegant. It was not Welsh. We wished it had been, for the adjectives jarred.

After resting thus for a while we began to discuss the question of route. Of course we differed—we generally do ; but the arguments of the Other One prevailed, and we turned off up a track on the heathery side of the hill. It went on very well for a time, but perhaps it is hardly necessary to say that we very soon lost our way. Then in the distance we saw a cottage and made a bee-line for it, but the occupants, an old gentleman who only spoke Welsh and a girl of about fourteen who had come out to spend Bank Holiday with her grandpapa, could give us little aid.

The girl translated our queries to the old man, and his answers to us, but we did not arrive at much, so, thanking them, we went on, following little green sheep-paths among the heather, which latter was only beginning to think about coming into blossom. At last we sighted a farmhouse snugged down in a green valley, and made for it. A man with but little

English told us it was Greich, and when we asked the way to Llangollen pointed sternly back to the path by which we had come.

'Is there no other way?' we asked pleadingly.

'No!'—with an emphatic shake of the head. 'You must go along there and you will come out by the *Traveller's Inn*.'

Rather disappointed, but still cheered by a remote possibility of tea at the *Traveller's Inn*, we did retrace our steps, and then, striking the Ruthin road a good bit farther on than where we had quitted it, we arrived at the hostelry mentioned. Sounds of revelry issued from it as we came to the door, and the good man who answered our knock said he had fifteen parties waiting for tea already. But that man had a heart, and touched by our sad reception of his remarks, took us over to his sister-in-law at a farmhouse opposite, and asked her to supply us with the tea we desired. To this, after some demur, she consented, and brought us into her kitchen. Such a kitchen. A huge fireplace with a settle on either side; a beautiful, dark-oak dresser laden with pewter plates and dishes shining like silver; some very handsome harness polished to dazzling brightness hanging on the wall, while from the rafters dangled hams and pieces of bacon, and bunches of drying herbs. Everything as clean and neat as possible—indeed, a most shining and radiant clean-

liness which kindled very genuine admiration in our feminine hearts.

We had a very nice tea, with bread and butter and currant loaf flavoured with cinnamon. After expressing our gratitude and persuading our hostess to accept some remuneration, we said good-bye and trudged off on our six-mile walk home. When we reached the top of the Pass the clouds had kindly lifted, and Snowdon showed himself among a company of mountains. Reaching Llangollen about half-past six, we found the little town a moving mass of holiday-makers, while at the station an excited station-master was marshalling the crowd who were beginning to trend homewards.

CHAPTER VII

Chirk

WE left Llangollen at 9.40 and got to Chirk about eleven. We had to change at Ruabon and wait half an hour, so we rushed off, got the key, and inspected the interior of the Church. At the east end of the north aisle is a sort of mortuary chapel of the Wynn family. One beautiful tomb has the recumbent effigies of a man in armour and his wife in the dress of the fifteenth century. Round the sides are little angels bearing shields. We had not time to decipher the inscription, but it must be the tomb described by Pennant, who gives the inscription, and which commemorated John Eyton and his wife. 'This gentleman,' says Pennant, 'joined Henry VII before the battle of Bosworth and for his good services had considerable grants of land in these parts.' There was also a monument to Lady Henrietta Wynn—an angel with the anchor of Hope—and one of a gentleman in Stuart dress.

On arriving at Chirk our first object was to find a lodging, which was not such an easy business as

might have been expected. Indeed, in Chirk proper it proved impossible, and we had to cross the ravine of the Ceiriog to Chirk Bank, which is a new suburb on the English side of the river. Passing over the canal, which is carried on an aqueduct over the river, we came to a row of neat cottages with gardens filled with every kind of flower. Here at last we found a hostess who was willing to entertain us, and very glad we were, for this was the first really hot day of the year. The drawback to staying here rather than at Chirk is that you are a long way from everything : all the shops, the post office, the station and the Church are on the other side of the river, so that much time is spent in ascending or descending the steep banks of the Ceiriog. It is very picturesque. We remembered that it was along this valley that Henry II advanced through storms of rain to meet Owen Gwynedd marching from Corwen, as has been mentioned in an earlier chapter.

Our first visit was to the Church. This is interesting from the number of monuments of the Middleton family, who appear, from the inscriptions, to have been quite too good for this world. The best is that of Sir Thomas Middleton, lord of Chirk Castle during the Parliamentary Wars. There is also a monument to Doctor Walter Balcanqual, a distinguished Scotch clergyman. He was Dean of Rochester and afterwards Dean of Durham, but in 1645, having

become unpopular because of his loyalty to the King, he took refuge in Chirk Castle, where he died, worn out by the fatigue of the journey and the inclemency of the weather. The weather plays a conspicuous part in the story of Wales. The modern stained-glass windows, presented by members of the Middleton and Trevor families, are very fine indeed.

On August 4 we started to find the Dyke. We followed the canal as far as the station, and then turned into a road leading past the beautiful iron gates of Chirk Castle to the New Hall Farm, always with the park of Chirk Castle on our left. Now we saw the Dyke through a gate, by which we entered and pursued our quarry as far as we could to the more private grounds. It was a very fine piece, with large trees growing over it and with the fosse clearly defined. Leaving the Park it ran straight to the lane, where it formed the hedge for a short distance, and then entered a field on the right. This field was effectively protected, and we had to go down a steep lane for some distance before we could enter it. This we accomplished after a time, and were able to follow the Dyke through several fields, where it again formed the hedge. The sky was brilliant and the hedges were a mass of flowers, clothing the old Dyke with a garment of lovely colour. We noticed a very delicate pink mallow, also St. John's wort, knapweed, frail

harebells, sweet honeysuckle and a host of others. After a time our course was interrupted, and the Dyke was lost in great fields of wheat and barley, all, as we found by inscriptions on the gates, the property of the lord of Chirk Castle, indeed monarch of all he surveys. Sadly we took to the lane, but very soon this led us back to the line of the Dyke, again clearly visible. A very fine section occurred just before Plas Offa, a farmhouse on the Llangollen road built almost on the Dyke. We crossed this road and followed the Dyke over a piece of rising ground, from which we had a beautiful view of the Llangollen valley with Dinas Brân in the distance, and at last reached the canal, which was an effectual bar to further progress. This was not to be regretted, as we could see that the Dyke could be traced no farther, as the railway and collieries have obliterated all traces, and we made our way home by the somewhat dreary and dusty Holyhead road.

In the afternoon we walked in the opposite direction and found a part of Wat's Dyke, near an old mill on the road leading to St. Martins. The principal part was inaccessible, being enclosed in private grounds, but there was a clearly marked section in the grounds of the mill.

August 5, Chirk Castle.—Chirk Castle is only to be visited between the hours of two and five on

Monday and Thursday. This was Thursday and a very hot day indeed, so we wished that the master of Chirk had allowed somewhat more latitude as regards hours. The long walk through the Park was very hot and fatiguing, and the last part, when we reached the drive, was on a hot, stony path. We ventured to walk on the grass, where a large herd of cows were grazing, but were ordered off with really brutal insolence, and were told that, by the Squire's orders, no one might step on the grass. Where thirty cows were feeding it was hard to see what additional damage could have been done by two footsore tourists, and we can only hope that the Squire's orders were misinterpreted, or that, at any rate, he was not aware of the manner in which they were carried out.

But the Castle compensated for everything. It dominates the country by its dignity, its beauty, its reserve of strength. It gives, above all, the sensation of its long experience, of all it has seen, and of all the tales it could tell; of the pictures it might give where we only have vague and doubtful outlines. For in everything which has happened in Wales, as far back as we know it, Chirk and its lords have been concerned. It stands close by the great Dyke; so in Offa's time it must have been a place of importance. It must have been in its immediate vicinity that Caractacus fought and

lost his last battle against the Romans. Henry II led his troops, wearied and famished with their long and difficult march through the ravines and forests of the Border, to meet Owen Gwynedd and his Welshmen close below Chirk Castle, then called Castell Crogen. This was the property of the lords of Dinas Brân, and remained in their possession until the death of Gryffydd ap Madoc in the reign of Edward I. His son was placed under the guardianship of Roger Mortimer, who murdered the boy and seized his inheritance.

The Mortimers were a fierce and cruel race. We hear of one of them at Hastings, a follower of the Conqueror. The Mortimers acquired lands in Wales and intermarried with princely families, so that on the death of Davydd in 1245 a Ralph Mortimer was a candidate for the Welsh crown. They seem to have inherited the qualities and defects of both races, blending the cool craft of the Norman with the wild passion and fiery imagination of the Celt. Their brilliant ability made their great crimes conspicuous even at that time, when great crimes were common. Roger Mortimer founded Chirk Castle, one of the strongest of the line of Border fortresses set up for the subjection of the Welsh. He took the side of the King in the Baron's War and assisted in the final defeat of Simon de Montfort at the battle of Evesham. We are told

that the great Earl's head was sent as a trophy to the wife of Roger Mortimer. After the accession of Edward II. his new favourite, Hugh Despencer, by his marriage with Eleanor, heiress of the Earl of Gloucester, assumed the lordship of a great part of South Wales, and quarrels began with the Mortimers, who were not the kind of men to endure any encroachment from neighbours. In 1321 they invaded Glamorgan with the help of the Earl of Lancaster, took Newport and Cardiff, and drove the Despencers into exile, and for the time were all-powerful in Wales. But in the following year Edward collected an army and crossed the Severn. The Mortimers tried to prevent him, but no Lancaster came to their aid. They were defeated at the battle of Bridge, and the two Mortimers, uncle and nephew, were sent to the Tower. There the elder died, but young Roger made his escape and fled to France, where he joined Queen Isabella. He soon became her lover. A great conspiracy, embracing lords, clergy and commons was formed on the side of the Queen, and she, with Mortimer, landed at the mouth of the Orwell. The unfortunate King was taken prisoner, forced to abdicate, and given into the keeping of Henry, Earl of Lancaster, whose brother he had beheaded in 1322. His terrible death in Berkeley Castle soon followed. For three years Mortimer lived in almost royal

Sketch Map shewing track of the Dykes.

state, king in all but name. His overbearing disposition, and the show of sovereignty he affected, made him unpopular, and the shameless connection with the Queen was detested by the clergy and middle classes. In 1330, Edward III being now eighteen years old and himself the father of a son, determined to free himself from this degrading bondage. Mortimer was seized, sent to the Tower, and after a hasty trial hanged at Tyburn. He was not quite forty years old; few men can have experienced such changes of fortune in so short a time.

Roger, the third Earl of March, married Philippa, the granddaughter of Edward III, and his son, Roger Mortimer, was declared heir to the English throne by Richard II. Edmund Mortimer married a daughter of Owen Glendower and was his most important ally. His niece, Anne Mortimer, was the wife of the Duke of York, and her grandson was King of England as Edward IV.

After this time the Castle changed its lords frequently. For a time it belonged to the Stanleys, and afterwards to Elizabeth's favourite, Dudley, Earl of Leicester, but in 1614 it was purchased by Sir Thomas Middleton. This Sir Thomas was Lord Mayor of London and brother of Sir Hugh Middleton, the founder of the New River Company. His son, also Sir Thomas, was a distinguished soldier. He

fought on the side of the Parliament, and was appointed Major-General for North Wales. He besieged and took Montgomery and Powys Castles, but was not equally successful in the case of his own domicile, which had been occupied by the Royalist troops. A letter from Sir John Wylie to Prince Rupert is preserved at the Castle which mentions the attack and failure. In 1659 Sir Thomas changed his policy and joined in the rising in favour of Charles II. He was defeated by a better man than himself, General Lambert, and Chirk Castle was again besieged, and this time forced to surrender. After the Restoration the King showed his gratitude by the gift of a splendid cabinet of ebony inlaid with tortoise-shell, and ornamented with silver and adorned with paintings by Rubens.

Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale paid a visit to Chirk during their tour in Wales, and we find the great doctor writing to Boswell that he had seen a castle in Wales which would contain everyone he had seen in Scotland. This must have been Chirk, which has been said to be the largest inhabited house in Great Britain.

It presents a very imposing appearance, forming a great quadrangle with three great round towers in the front and back, with two at the side. We entered at the back and found ourselves inside a court which did not include the great front door, so that

there must be a double enclosure. We were shown over by a neat maid, who told her story very prettily and correctly, but there is not much satisfaction in seeing a house with such a large company. We first entered a large room on the ground floor containing Cromwellian relics, black leather jacks and other curiosities, and also the famous letter to Prince Rupert during the siege. In the passage we were shown one of the original New River pipes! We then ascended a noble staircase occupying one of the round towers. At the top we saw the famous picture of the waterfall, Pistyll Rhiadr, where the artist, misunderstanding the request that he would put in a few 'sheeps,' has introduced a fleet of men-of-war. We passed through a dining-room, drawing-room and Long Gallery. The ceilings are very fine, being the work of Italian artists in the eighteenth century. The pictures, family portraits and others, are very interesting, or rather, would have been so had time been allowed for their inspection. I did manage to have a good look at Cromwell's general, Sir Thomas Middleton, and his daughter, who married first the Earl of Warwick, and then for his sins, Addison of the *Spectator*.

The last room we entered was a bedroom, with a fourpost bed and embroidered counterpane, where Charles I slept during his flight from Raglan to Chester. Here also is the costly cabinet presented

by his son. Adjoining this room is a dressing-room built wholly in the thickness of the wall. Descending the fine staircase again we crossed the courtyard, and in the oldest part of the Castle were shown the old servants' hall. Among the other curiosities was a small barrel on wheels for passing round the table. Then we visited the dungeon—forty-two steps from the ground floor—a very gloomy, round chamber imperfectly lighted by narrow slits in the enormously thick wall. Tapers were provided for this descent, and I venture to suggest that for a large party in their summer dresses this is distinctly dangerous. I threw away my taper and came last in the procession, so that I could neither be set alight to myself nor cause similar inconvenience to anyone else. This was the *pièce de résistance* and end of the show. The charge for admission is one shilling for each person, and the fees are given to the Cottage Hospital. On leaving the Castle we saw a fine piece of Dyke near the building.

CHAPTER VIII

Oswestry

WE arrived at Oswestry in the morning and set about finding apartments, which we succeeded in doing after some search. But alas for the hopes of men, or rather, women ! From that shelter we had to beat a hasty retreat in the evening on discovering our landlady in an almost helpless state of intoxication. We fled, with the kind aid of the 'Boots' of the *Wynnstay Arms*, leaving our hostess swaying unsteadily in the passage, muttering incoherently, 'I say—Mishter—I want—to—shpeak—to you !' The 'Mishter' regarded her with a severe eye and never uttered a word. Once within the protection of the hotel we breathed freely again and rejoiced, although we rather regretted certain succulent edibles which we had ordered and which we had to leave behind us in our flight.

Oswestry is rather a bustling little town with quite a modern look, save for one or two old timbered houses which witness to the antiquity of the place, and stand with a sad yet stately aristocratic air of

faded dignity among the flimsy brick and slate of the modern buildings. Surely these fine old houses must have been the town houses of the country gentry when there were still some country Society centres, and everybody did not rush up to the London whirlpool.

These little country towns, which seem so banal, so commonplace, so dull to live in now, have often surprising histories. Go back a little way and you plunge into wars and rumours of wars, stories of battles, sieges, burnings, plunderings! Great figures of kings and mail-clad warriors ride ghostly through the streets, and all the air quivers and rings with the shrilling of trumpets, the whiz of flying arrows, the clang of battle-axe and pike and sword. No, it could not have been dull when any day some Conan or Gruffydd or Llewelyn might come rushing down with a horde of wild Welshmen to burn and harry, or the Norman kings assemble their troops here to return the compliment in Powysland. To the poor townspeople one guesses that it was very much the same who came—they were probably in the case of those who dwell between 'the devil and the deep sea.'

Oswestry has seen its full share of fighting in the old days. It began early, for here, in the 'Nones of August A.D. 642,' was a great battle between Penda, the fierce old heathen Mercian

king, and Oswald, the saintly king of Northumbria. Oswald was defeated and killed, and Penda sliced off his head and hands and put them up on posts on the battlefield. But now miracles happened! That arm and hand which Bishop Aidan had blessed at the feast when the King sent away the dish set before him to feed the hungry poor outside, now remained uncorrupted—so the Venerable Bede tells us—and were later kept in a silver case as revered relics in St. Peter's Church at Bamborough, for King Oswy came and took away those relics, while the body of the Saint was carried off to the Monastery of Bardney in Lincolnshire. Here, too, wonders ensued, for at first 'the Brethren refused to admit the remains, because though they knew him (Oswald) to be a holy man yet because he was of another province, and had reigned over them as a foreign king, they retained their ancient aversion to him even after death. Thus it came to pass that the relics were left in the open air all night with only a large tent spread over them —but during that night a pillar of light reaching from the waggon to Heaven was seen by almost all the inhabitants of the Province of Lindsye. Hereupon in the morning the Brethren who had refused them the day before, began to pray earnestly that those holy relics might be deposited among them. Accordingly the bones being washed, were

put into a shrine—and placed in the Church with due honour—and they hung up over the monument his banner made of purple and gold; and poured out the water in which they had washed the bones —in a corner of the sacred place. From that time forth the very earth which received that holy water had the virtue of expelling devils from the bodies of persons possessed!'

Not only that earth, but the dust from the spot on the battlefield where Oswald had died possessed miraculous powers, and Bede records many miracles wrought by it. His relics did not remain at Bardney, but in A.D. 909 or 910 were carried to St. Oswald's in Gloucestershire by Ethelred, Earl of Mercia, and Elflaeda, daughter of King Alfred.

There was a Castle here in the good old times, and for long it was held by the Fitz-Alans, Earls of Arundel. It was by one of this noble family that Giraldus Cambrensis tells us he and Archbishop Baldwin, when they were preaching the Crusade in 1188, were received. Leaving Chester after the feast of Easter, 'we slept at Oswaldstree, or the Tree of St. Oswald, and were most sumptuously entertained after the English manner by William Fitzalan, a notable and liberal young man.'

One would like to know what was the 'English manner,' and wherein it differed from other manners. However, the Archdeacon seems to have approved

of it, and let us hope the townspeople had some share in the feast ; no doubt they crowded to see the Archbishop. Such a great ecclesiastic must have attracted all the devout.

It seems to have been this ' liberal and noble young man ' that granted Oswestry its first Charter, called by the Welsh *Shartar Gwtta*, or the short charter, in the reign of Henry II. But later on there was terrible trouble, for the son of William, a John Fitz-Alan, took part with the Barons against King John, who came along and burnt the town to ashes in 1216. Twenty years later poor Oswestry was in trouble again, for then Llewelyn ap Jorwerth came down like a wolf on the fold, and again the unlucky town was set afire. So when Edward I came to the throne, and things were straighter, the townspeople decided to build them a wall with four gates, three of which were standing in Pennant's day. I think they must be all gone now, for we saw nothing of them.

It would, I fear, be tedious to recount all the battles and sieges and general scrimmages which this little town has witnessed; but one event is interesting. It was here, Pennant states, that Richard II and a committee of Parliament settled that the great dispute between Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, should be settled by the decision of arms at a

tournament. Shakespeare places this event, I think, in London, the tournament at Coventry. At any rate, Richard II seems to have been at Oswestry several times, and granted the town its first Royal Charter.

But it was for the Dyke that we had come to Oswestry, and now we must resume our proper search; so next morning, which was Saturday, August 7, we started again on our quest, and had a really sporting day. In order to save fatigue, we ordered a little wagonette to drive us some miles to a spot where we hoped to find our friend. We mounted a gradual ascent till we reached really high ground, and should have had a fine view but for the haze—heat haze—which hung around. We came past the Grammar School grounds, and partly along by King Oswald's battle-field, up to the racecourse, a fine open, breezy spot overgrown with bracken and gorse. The course, like a broad, green ribbon of turf, went winding amid the fern, and, our driver told us, made the figure 8. Here we consulted the map with him, and at last he brought us exactly to the place where the Dyke is marked on the ordnance map. Here we descended, and saying farewell to our driver, a very civil young fellow, we started off on our own feet. We climbed over a stile, and there was our Dyke, fine and grand, with tall fir trees growing

out of him, and a crowd of deep crimson foxgloves fringing his substantial flank. A footpath ran by the side, and we went on rejoicing, mounting up till we had a fine view over what we supposed to be the Shropshire Plain. But what we really saw, and the illusion was so complete as to almost make us doubt our geography, was the sea! A grey sea, spreading away to a dark line of horizon, above which, from a vaporous light band, three great, feathery, white clouds sprang and arched over our heads far away to the West. Into this grey sea, which showed flecks of light where the sun shone on the water, projected wooded headlands, and capes and bays could be traced all along the coast.

'But it can't be the sea,' we ejaculated; 'because the sea is not in sight. It must be the Shropshire Plain! Did not our intelligent young driver tell us so!'

Having settled this point we plodded along, rejoicing in the free, wild country. Here and there were plantations of fir and larch. One wood was remarkable for the fact that between the trees all was green grass instead of bare earth and fir needles as usual. About us the bracken grew in sweeps of beauty, with here and there a bank of gorse and broom full of seed pods growing ripe and brown. Now and then we quite unintentionally

scared a pheasant or a rabbit nearly into fits; sometimes a peewit went away lamenting, or a flustered blackbird rushed off scolding. The thin clouds melted away and the sky grew blue, and the sun shone hotly, but a cool breeze blew the scent of the sun-warmed pines in our faces. Presently, always following the Dyke, which we had to cross here and there to avoid fir plantations, we saw the roofs of a farm shaded by a growth of sycamore trees. Here a postman came along, and we asked him the name of the farm.

'Norseddyyn,' he said; 'or the Rossetts, as you please. And 'tis kept by Mr. Roberts.'

We had to go through the farmyard, where a small boy stared at us. Then we found ourselves in a field with the Dyke on our right hand. The fosse was well marked, and the slope of the bank steep and guarded at the top by rabbit wire. Selatyn Hill rose beyond it, an open, ferny, heather- and bracken-covered eminence of some height, with a sort of little knob at the top which we thought might be a tumulus, only nothing was marked on the map. We crossed several fields, and then reached a copse securely fenced in. There was a five-barred gate, which we had to surmount, for it obstinately refused to open, but soon had to remount that obstacle and find a spot where we could cross to the eastern side of the Dyke. After a search we

found a way over the rabbit wire. Fortunately there was no barbed wire, which is quite too wicked a thing for respectable people to have anything to do with, and we discovered a nice path on the east side. We were really on the slope of Selatyn Hill and clear of wood on our side, though it continued on the other. Just here we came to a keeper's cottage. A dog came running out to meet us, and following him a young woman, who seemed very glad of a chat. 'It was so lonesome,' she said. She had been accustomed to company, for she came from the racecourse. (I had noticed a few scattered cottages there, but still it was not a crowded spot.) She told us that they had quite a long way to go to fetch good water, and they had to save all the rainwater they could. She made her own bread, but she had only the oven by the fire to bake it in; there had been a good bread oven, but when they repaired the cottage it had been pulled down, which was a pity, because it was a good oven. They had been snowed up in the winter. When they wanted any grocery her husband had to go on a horse to fetch it. The Church was two miles off and they didn't get there very often.

We said good-bye, though our friend seemed loth to part, and got back to the Dyke; but only for a yard or two, for a valley opened below us

along which ran the Selatyn road. Here we had to descend to the road, turn to the left, where there was a gate and a cottage, apparently in private ground; but we found a lane which bent round to the right and led uphill, and there we caught sight of our friend again, across a field travelling away uphill. A gate led into that field against which reposed some lazy calves, who refused to move till we resorted to forceful methods, and applied the toes of our boots to their fat sides. This was effectual. They got out of the way in a hurry, and we got in and toiled up a steep grass field by the brink of the fosse, which here had water in it. All this part in the valley, and further on, is called Craignant. Soon we came to an open moor where heather and fern had free course, and we found a path along our Dyke amid heather and bilberry, Blechnum fern, foxgloves and all the lovely, wild growth of such a place. Then came a stretch of grass land crossed by curious parallel hedges, and here were the ruins of some stone building, but what it had been, farm or cottage or tower, we could not tell. But now we went astray. We came to another wood, all so securely tied up with barbed wire that it might have contained a gold mine. There was a sort of gate or boarded-up stile, but nothing inside but a tangle of trees and undergrowth, while a footpath ran off to the right.

So we took this, thinking to go around and pick up our Dyke at the other end. We descended into a deep dingle, crossing a stream and climbing up on to a fern-covered hill. But at last we realised we were not only far from our Dyke, but were losing our way to Castle Mill. When we were near the ruin I have mentioned, we had noticed the roof of a keeper's cottage above us to the left, and now, with heroic fortitude, for it was extremely hot, we determined to retrace our line of march and make for the cottage. So we turned, and presently struck into a little lane with small trees and bushes meeting overhead, a way so ancient, so hollow, such a tunnel of slumbrous shade, that it was borne in upon us that it *must* be an ancient British trackway, and that prehistoric feet had trodden it in the far-away past. One could almost see the skin-clad figures stealing along.

This lane led us to the cottage we had spied. Outside a white turkey regarded us in a calm, aristocratic manner; in the garden a clump of tiger lilies blazed in the sunshine, and in the doorway stood a very pleasant woman who soon explained to us our mistake. We should have mounted that forbidding-looking stile, and there was a path-way through the copse. But now we had better go round by the lane, and we should see a stile which would enable us to get back to the Dyke

and follow by its side to Castle Mill. With grateful thanks we departed; the white turkey gave another aristocratic stare, and three geese hissed and gobbled at us in a very vulgar, radical manner. But we found our stile and our Dyke. Now the track began to go downwards, while high up in the distance before us shone Chirk Castle, lordly, magnificent, crowning a sweep of splendid woods; and between us and those huge round towers lay a deep, deep valley, with the roofs of farms and cottages peeping out of bosky copses and clustered orchards, set among fields of barley and rye, and smooth, freshly mown meadows. Down and down and down we went, the way reminding us of many a descent from high passes into Swiss valleys. Then we crossed a road and, passing through a shady bit of wood, came to an old, grey, stone bridge spanning the rippling, gushing Ceiriog river, a stream that has been mentioned before in connection with our Plantagenet friend, Henry II. On the other side of the Bridge is a halting-place of the Glyn Ceiriog light railway. A train was due, but we had just time to purchase a bottle of ginger-beer from an old lady who, with a little boy, sat on a doorstep shelling peas, while near them a tabby cat reposed against a sunny wall with two fat kittens playing round her. We were feeling very satisfied with our morning's work. We had

traced our Dyke all the way to the Ceiriog, and we could almost see where it ran up to Chirk Castle. Practically, we had tracked it all the way from Ruabon.

We did not have long to wait for the train: it came shambling along the side of the high-road, and so jolted and rattled us along under the hanging woods of Chirk Castle to Chirk station.

Arrived at Chirk, we found we had time to visit Whittington Castle, which is only five miles distant. On arriving there we asked our way of the station-master, who told us to cross the fields as the pleasantest way to the village. We took his advice, and as we traversed the level meadows we saw the grey ruins of the Castle rising amid great elm trees, and surrounded by still waters. We also caught sight of the Church to our left, which building was a great shock to us. The small church of which Pennant speaks, built by the founder of the Castle, Guarine de Metz, who also is said to have been buried in the porch so that all who entered might pray for the repose of his soul, has been swept away. 'It was rebuilt in 1806 under the direction of its worthy minister, the Reverend Whitehall Davies,' says Professor John Rhys. One wishes the reverend minister had had a better taste in architecture, for now there stands an

oblong, red-brick building with a most nondescript sort of tower. Fortunately, it is almost hidden by fine trees, one a grand cedar.

Close by is an inn, the *Boot Inn*, a most venerable hostelry, to which we went and applied for tea, of which we partook in an upstairs room; its ceiling was crossed by beams of black oak of a most ancient appearance.

Then we went off to the Castle. A bridge crosses the Moat, which spreads out into a wide sort of pond on either side. The entrance to the Castle itself is guarded by two imposing round towers. Inside there is an old timbered building, and then the ruins, the plan of which it is difficult to make out in a short visit. A high mound seems as if it ought to be the site of the Keep, but it is outside the old Castle yard, now a bowling-green, which is still surrounded by part of the walls and towers which defended it.

This place, Pennant tells us, has been supposed to be the Drev Wen, or the White Town, celebrated by Llowarch Hen, a bard of the race of the Cumbrian Britons who lived about A.D. 590. Here, he says, was slain Condolanus, a chieftain of his country, in a fight against Irish invaders. The bards also make this place the chief residence of Tudor Trevor, a British nobleman living some four hundred years later. After the Conquest it came into the possession

of Roger, Earl of Shrewsbury, that is, Roger Montgomery, and so passed to Robert de Belême, his son—Robert the Cruel, Robert the Devil. When he came to grief, Henry I bestowed it on William, a nephew of Pain Peverel, and now we have a chivalrous romance. This last gentleman had a daughter, Mellet by name, who declared that she would only marry a knight of prowess! Guarine de Metz, a noble of Lorraine who was now Lord of Abberbury, hears of this and goes, among other young aspirants, to Peverel's castle of the Peak to compete for the prize. He appears with 'his sylver shelde, and a proude pecock upon his heualme creste,' overthrows his rivals, carries off the fair prize, and receives the lordship of Whittington as her dower. His posterity assumed the name of FitzWarine and continued lords of this place for four hundred years, and every heir for nine descents preserved the Christian name of Fulk.

This gallant gentleman is supposed to have been the architect of the ruined Castle we see now, though it must have been a strong place before his chivalrous entry. Did the Lady Mellet have a word in the planning, and choose in which tower her bower should be? It would take too long to relate the history of those nine Fulks, though it would be a moving story if it could be properly told. A string of names carries so little conviction

unless you can set each in its proper environment and light it up with local colour. The third Fulk had a specially adventurous career, and one writer has identified him with Robin Hood. Certain it is that he was outlawed by King John, but at last was pardoned, and he lived at Whittington in great splendour. A well-written and interesting little book, entitled 'The Story of Whittington Castle,' can be obtained at the gatehouse for the small sum of twopence. This we purchased, and sitting on a ruined wall, perused it as the quiet evening shadows crept over the tranquil meadows and the swallows skimmed across the shining water. Then we had to go for the train to Oswestry.

The next day was Sunday, and we duly went to the large Parish Church, dedicated, I believe, to St. Oswald, as is only right and proper. It was very near our hotel, indeed, almost facing it. Pennant speaks of it as being 'outside the town in a suburb without the New Gate,' and states that it is of no great antiquity, but that the old Church was demolished in 1616. 'I suppose,' he goes on to say, 'that the present immediately rose on the ruins.' The base of the tower of the Church is curiously included in the west end of the south aisle, and we fancied must be ancient. It seems that the tower or steeple had been pulled down as far as the body of the Church in the Great Rebellion, so that 'the

WHITTINGTON CASTLE.

town could not be annoyed from it by the enemy.' The statement that the Church was outside the walls explains this, for the town had been garrisoned for the King, and it was the governor who then pulled down the Church tower. It was besieged and taken by the Parliamentary troops in 1644. There is a fine but dilapidated monument to the Yale family in the north aisle. It represents a man and his wife, who kneel face to face at a prayer-desk. The lady is covered from head to foot with a long, plaited veil.

In the afternoon we went to Old Oswestry. The way is past the station, and then up a turning into the Gobowen road. Following this we came to two isolated, wooded hills. The second is Old Oswestry, the site of the old British Town or Camp. Turning in at a field, we found the base of the hill encircled by an iron fence, but presently we came to a gate which gave admittance into the wooded enclosure. We climbed by a very steep path up the three trenches to the top, which is a flat, open grass field some fifteen acres in extent. Here I suppose stood the round huts of the Britons. The steep sides of the hill show the triple banks of defence very clearly, though they are now covered with trees. We descended again to the lowest path, and, following it, came back to the place from whence we had started. At first the path had

been cleared a little, for there had evidently been a dense growth of stinging-nettles, varied with the wild garlic, the scent of whose dying stalks was very strong. But farther on we came to bracken and fern and a more truly woodland growth.

Was this town occupied when Penda defeated and slew St. Oswald ? The Saxons called the place Maserfeld. It is also called Hen Ddinas, and, anciently, Caer Ogyrfan, 'from Ogyrfan, a hero co-existent with Arthur,' says Pennant. 'There is no certainty,' he goes on, 'of the origin of it; some ascribe it to Oswald, or to Penda, and imagine that it was possessed, before the battle of Maserfeld, by one of those princes. Others think it to have been the work of the ancient Britons: to which opinion I incline. The strength and labour in forming it evince that it was not a sudden operation like that of a camp. Its construction even to the oblong trenches is British.'

Near by here we ought to have seen a piece of Wat's Dyke which ran across this post. But it was securely enclosed, and we were not able to trace it through the wood. But it is very interesting to find it in such close connection with this great British encampment.

That evening there were some other staying guests in the hotel. They seemed very much

surprised at our ideas of enjoying a holiday. They were motoring about, and seemed a good deal bored, which is not wonderful, as they were seeing nothing but dusty roads and dull-looking little towns of whose history they had not an inkling.

CHAPTER IX

Welshpool and Powys

ON August 7 we left Oswestry by train for Llanclys. This is the first station after Oswestry, and we hoped, by leaving the train there, to find a portion of the Dyke between it and Llandymynech. Unfortunately, no person that we met between the two places, and there were not many of them, had ever heard of it. So we consulted the map and walked towards a place called Whitehaven, where we looked across a valley to heights crowned with bare cliffs of pale reddish and buff-coloured rocks. Below these cliffs were 'works'—limeworks and quarries: Mother Earth all seamed and torn and ploughed up with engines that filled the summer air with pulsating beatings. This walk to Whitehaven subsequently proved to have been a mistake, and we should have done better to have followed the road to Llandymynech.

Now we turned off to the left in quest of our Dyke, and soon found ourselves on a wide upland overgrown with gorse and heather, and silent save

for the bleating of sheep and the humming of insects ; a great contrast to the busy scene on the other side of the valley. We mounted up higher and higher, the dew still wet on the grass, and the lonely hills spread out before us while we searched. Up and down we went, hither and thither, attracted by this bank and that, ever getting away to lonelier regions, but never satisfactorily finding what we wanted. Presently we came to some cottages, where we made inquiries. No ! Nobody had ever heard of the Dyke. Wasn't there a bit at Llandymynech ? Yes, perhaps so.

' What hill was this ? ' we asked.

' Oh ! this was Llanclys Hill ! '

' And what are the cottages called ? '

' Oh ! they had no name. They were just the cottages ! '

So on we went, and now two round, abrupt eminences rose before us, which in the distance looked like a British Camp, but nearer they lost their distinctive character.

On the map a great wood was marked, and the Dyke seemed to pass through it ; but when we reached it we found it to be a sacred grove surrounded by an impenetrable barbed-wire fence. We tried to circumvent it, lost our way, and at last, weary and disappointed, determined to abandon the chase and make for Llandymynech station.

Here again misfortune dogged our path, for we asked our way to the station without mentioning any station in particular, and were directed accordingly. On our way down the hill we met the only intelligent person in the district, who told us that we must have been close to the Dyke, which actually crossed the road by which we had come. Shame to say it, we were too hot and tired to retrace our steps to the top of the hill, and that piece of the Dyke remained unvisited.

Arriving at the station we found that its name was not Llandymynech, but Pant, and asking the time of the train for Welshpool, were told that no train ever went to Welshpool from there, and that we were about a mile from Llandymynech station, whence a train *did* go to Welshpool which we should probably miss. We were to follow the Canal. We followed the Canal for some distance, then began to feel misgivings and turned into the road, then felt misgivings again and turned back to the Canal, then consulted an ancient native by whose advice we reverted to the road, crossed a series of stiles, and reached the station in time to see our train leaving the platform. No other train till 3.7, it being then just noon.

We went off to the village, where there seemed quite a large number of hotels, to look for lunch. At the first we were told that there was nothing to

eat in the house, at the next that the hostess was busy washing and could not be interrupted, at the third we found a kind hostess and a welcome meal. All honour to the *Lion*! Long may he flourish!

On the ordnance map is marked, in large letters, St. Benion's Well, in the immediate vicinity, but no one in the village, not even the friendly and hospitable *Lion*, had ever heard of it, so we had to give up the idea and be content with visiting the Church. On entering we were amazed at the elaborate Norman decoration, and thought we had discovered a marvel, but a tablet revealed that it had been rebuilt in 1844. We thought it must be a copy of some Norman or Romanesque building, for it has something of a foreign air. Unfortunately, they have eked out their stone with brick, which has a poor effect.

Then, having a good deal of time on our hands, we went down to the Canal, and found a little bit of shade in which we sat and drew pictures. Beyond the Canal the ground rose up in an abrupt sweep to the pale red cliffs, resembling those we had seen at Llanclys. They looked like the ramparts of some giant castle.

We sat there till it was time to return to the station, and at length we reached Welshpool about 3.30, and wandered up the High Street to find a lodging, but everything looked messy and uninviting.

At last we consulted a policeman, who told us that the *Royal Hotel* was the best; so we made for it. That also looked dingy, and, moreover, showed a broken window, but we went in. Dingy the *Royal* might be, but it had a lofty spirit and a proper sense of its own worth. Seven shillings for a bedroom, and other charges in proportion, filled us with dismay, and even the Other One, who has quite an artistic indifference to expense, thought that it would not do. The courteous manageress suggested that the *Bull*, who belonged to the same company, was less extravagant in his charges, and showed us the way. Here we found comfortable rooms and reasonable terms, and after ordering dinner we went off to visit Powys Castle. We intended to find tea on our way, as the *Bull*, though courteous and friendly, was evidently not quite prepared for guests. We could only find one shop that offered tea to the wayfarer, and that was a baker's; but the tea was delightful, and so was our hostess, and her husband, and the baby, and we enjoyed it immensely.

Then we turned towards the Castle. Of course, the Castle is the chief object of interest, both for the unrivalled beauty of its situation and the interest its historic associations. Built by Cadogan, son of Bleddyn, the great Prince of Powys, it was the scene of some of the wildest storms of the stormy

Border chronicle. Robert of Belême, Earl of Shrewsbury, formed an ambitious scheme by which all Wales, and afterwards Ireland, were to form a great western kingdom. Shrewsbury was to be its capital, and was enlarged and fortified to suit this purpose. Robert made a league with Cadogan and his brothers, thus securing a strong line of Border castles, and also a retreat into the mountains if things went wrong. King Henry I recognised the strength of his adversary's position, and determined to employ fraud rather than force to overcome it. He made a splendid offer to Jorwerth ap Bleddyn, promising him all Powys and Ceredigion, with part of Dyved, if he would forsake Robert. Jorwerth fell into the snare, and Henry was able to overthrow his enemy. The Castle of Bridgenorth fell, his allies deserted him, and the great Earl had to surrender Shrewsbury and retire to Normandy, where he had enormous possessions.

But Jorwerth found he had made a mistake. The last thing that Henry intended was to raise up another all-powerful Welshman. He and his brother Meredith were soon in an English prison to meditate on the folly of trusting a Norman. Their brother Cadogan made peace with Henry, and a quiet time seemed to be coming for the land when the fatal beauty of a woman kindled the torch of war again. Nest, the daughter of the royal house of

Deheubarth, had been a ward of Henry I and had been shamefully treated by her guardian. She was now married to Cadogan's nephew, Gerald of Windsor, who held the great Castle of Pembroke. This Gerald had built a new castle at Cenarth, in the valley of the Teivi, and brought his wife there. At this time Cadogan came to Ceredigion (Cardigan) and held the Christmas feast. Gerald and his wife were present. Thither also came Cadogan's son Owen, and met Nest, and the same night stormed his cousin's new castle, burnt it to the ground and carried off his wife. The King was furious, but Owen would not give up the lady, and vengeance fell on Cadogan, who was deprived of all his estates. He was made prisoner, and Ceredigion was given to Gilbert de Clare. Jorwerth, Cadogan's brother, who ruled in Powys, was slain, and Cadogan met with a like fate.

Owen, the bold lover and fierce warrior, who had fled to Ireland for safety, now returned and gained possession of Powys, and, in alliance with Griffith ap Conan, Prince of Gwynedd, was threatening the Norman barons in their castles. Henry crossed the Border with a large army and advanced towards Snowdon, but winter was coming on, the weather, always on the side of the Welsh, was unfavourable, and Henry once more substituted intrigue for warfare. He first practised his wiles on Griffith, and

tried to induce him to desert his ally. The chivalrous Welshman turned a deaf ear to his blandishments, which did not prevent Henry from informing Owen that Griffith had made an independent agreement with him. Owen, on hearing this, made terms also, and received the promise of all Powys. He followed the King to Normandy and took an active part in the French war.

During his absence Griffith ap Rees, the brother of Nest, returned from Ireland, and soon succeeded in raising all the country against the Normans, and Owen was sent by the King with an army to oppose him ; and now, after so many years of prosperity, he reaped the reward of his early crime. Some Welshmen whom he had followed and plundered fell in with a party led by Gerald, his injured cousin, whose wife he had taken. Gerald pursued him at once, and Owen was ingloriously slain in the darkness by an unknown hand.

His uncle Meredith now reigned in Powys, and ruled with a hard hand. He kept the English at bay till his death in 1132, when his sons Madoc and Owen divided Powys between them.

Owen Cyveiliog, so called from the name of a district corresponding with Upper Montgomery, is one of the most interesting figures in Welsh history, renowned for his fiery eloquence and his poetic genius. Several of his poems are still extant. He

was the ally of Owen Gwynedd, and took the chief part in the defeat of Henry II on his second disastrous invasion. Subsequently he made peace with the English King, and even lived on friendly terms with him. We are told that during the crusading tour of Archbishop Baldwin and Giraldus Cambrensis, Owen Cyveiliog was the only Welsh Prince who did not go out to meet them, for which breach of etiquette he was excommunicated. He seems to have made his peace with the Church afterwards, for he founded the Monastery of Strata Marcella, where he died in 1197, having assumed the monastic habit some years before.

The Red Castle also saw stirring times at a later period during the Civil War, when it had passed to the family of the Herberts of Chirbury, though their chief residence was at Montgomery. All the famous portraits of the Herberts are preserved at Powys Castle; but, unfortunately, we could not see them, as the family were in residence at the time of our visit. The Herberts, like most of the Welsh, but unlike their neighbours the Middletons of Chirk, took the part of the King, though the first Lord Herbert of Chirbury seems to have been a somewhat lukewarm adherent. He declined Charles' invitation to attend him at Oxford on account of his health, and made a similar excuse when summoned by Rupert to Shrewsbury. It is said

that on his death-bed he sent for his old friend Bishop Usher to administer the Sacrament, giving as a reason that it could do him no harm, and that Usher refused to officiate. He had six brothers, of whom the most distinguished was George Herbert the poet. His verses show that strange combination of Puritan and mystical feeling which characterises the Welsh to the present day. His writings were constantly studied by Charles during his imprisonment. The son and grandson of the first Earl took a more active part on the Royalist side. The last Lord Herbert of Chirbury only left a daughter, who married Edward, the son of Lord Clive of Indian fame, and the estates passed to that family, in whose possession they still remain. Edward Clive was created Earl of Powys in 1804, and took the name of Herbert.

Well, the Castle is worthy of its history. It needs a better pen than mine to appreciate the beauties of the Park, though we did not see all or nearly all of it. Splendid trees and banks overgrown with bracken and great ponds covered with white and yellow lilies. It is from one of these that the town takes its name of Welshpool. Soon we saw below us a great herd of fallow deer. There must have been over a hundred of them. The great stags, with their huge antlers, kept somewhat apart from the rest in stately seclusion, but the

little ones were playing round them, and the whole herd was not far off. I fear that, owing to the delightful absence of notice boards and barbed wire, we unwittingly intruded into the more private grounds. Certain it is that we made our way up to the great entrance of the Red Castle, looked into the court at the Horse of Fame, and at the peacocks walking about with a stately air of proprietorship. Then we followed a path which led downhill past a sheet of water, then ascended and led us right in front of the building, with a splendid view of the Red Castle and the hanging gardens with their wonderful clipped evergreens and great statues. Well, we had a great treat, and no one was the worse for our unintentional intrusion. We came round to some outer buildings, and eventually to the path and gate by which we had entered.

Then we paid a visit to the Church. The walls of this are modern, but the nave pillars are old. It consisted formerly of a single aisle, but additional ones have been added. There are two beautiful recumbent figures of the two last Earls of Powys, and an old Elizabethan monument to some members of the Herbert family. There are two curious tombs in the churchyard, each with a full-sized skeleton carved on the side. They are said to belong to two French prisoners of war; but they have no inscriptions, and there is no record of them

in the register. There is also a stone supposed to be Druidical and of the same rock as one at Stonehenge.

We made an early start at 7.30 next morning, August 10, on account of the great heat. We crossed the Severn, which here flows north and is not a very imposing stream, and found our way to Leighton Church, and then to a house or village called Pentre, where an intelligent boy showed us the Dyke. We followed it for some distance, and then lost it near a farm called Moell-y-Ma. Here we asked for direction, but found none, so we walked on through the beautiful woods of Leighton Park, looking right and left for any sign of the Dyke. At last we took a more westerly path till we came to a neat house, which we found to be the Poultry House belonging to Leighton Hall. Here the mistress, a delicate-looking woman with a large family, told us that the Dyke was not far off, but quite at the top of the hill, and also offered that her eldest son should show us the way. We gladly accepted, and a small boy named Ernest, aged twelve, who was in his shirt-sleeves, was bidden put on his coat and go with us. We pleaded that he might go in deshabille as it was so hot; but No! Inexorably was he inducted into a coat and collar, and then he set off, going straight, by an almost perpendicular path, through the wood. It reminded us of times in Switzerland when, having lost our

way, some small child would guide us unfalteringly and unpantingly straight up a mountain. At last we reached a spot where our guide paused.

'There is the Dyke!' he said, pointing to a great growth of bracken.

It was nearly as high as ourselves, but we relentlessly crashed through, and mounted up on our old friend, from whose solid back we had a fine view, with the Red Castle standing lordly on its rock across the valley. We followed the Dyke towards the north for a bit and came out on the open hillside, and then we saw the reason why we had lost the wretch! It had not gone on properly, but had taken a sharp angle up the hill. At least, if the bit at Pentre was really the Dyke, it had divagated finely. So then we returned to the cottage, and there our guide refused sixpence which we offered him for his trouble; but we made him take it to buy some sweeties for himself and his eight brothers and sisters. We thought we should like to record the little fellow's action as showing a good spirit.

Now we walked on through the more decorative part of the Park. The ground here was beautifully laid out. Great Wellingtonias and Austrian pines were interspersed among the forest trees. Presently we met an Emu! He did not seem as much surprised as we were, and was quite disposed to be friendly.

The lodge-keeper told us that there were several in the Park, but that no eggs had been hatched this year; probably because of the very bad weather.

Now we were on the turnpike road and on our way to Forden, where we hoped to find the Dyke again, and on approaching the few cottages known by that name we saw it coming down the hill in a slant. We turned up a lane and traced it to the cottages, where we lost it again; but a kind woman directed us to a grassy path which ran along its broad back as far as another lane. Here we lost it altogether, without much regret, for by now it was intensely hot and we were very tired. It was just one o'clock, with three and a half miles of hot, shadeless highroad between us and Montgomery. How we traversed those miles remains a mystery to both. Partly, I think, by telling ourselves that the next building we should pass would be a house of entertainment where we might assuage our burning thirst. Of course, it never did turn out to be anything of the kind, but still the hope carried us on from one to another, till we saw the Church and the ruins of Montgomery Castle rising before us.

The first house in Montgomery was the *Cottage Inn*, and a rest in a cool room and milk and soda refreshed us mightily. We even had thoughts of staying there; but the hostess said the best hotel was the *Dragon*, and seemed to think that that would

be more suitable to our quality. So we proceeded through the tiny town, scarcely more than a village, and found the *Dragon*. What a delightful find that *Dragon* was and how we learned to love him must be left to the next chapter.

CHAPTER X

Montgomery

MONTGOMERY is a county town! This is a fact to be stated plainly, for, from its appearance, you would never guess it. As we approached it, trudging along the hot main road, we saw before us an abrupt hill rising from the sweep of a wide valley, and crowned with the crumbling ruins of a castle; then a cluster of houses below and a church tower. We walked up the quiet village street: here and there a shop showed a miscellaneous collection of articles in its windows. Then we passed a smart new chapel and a mingling of cottages with one or two 'villas,' and then, turning to the right hand, mounted a steep rise to the *Dragon Hotel*, an old black and white timbered building nestling close under the green wooded slope of the Castle hill.

We were accommodated at once with two neat little bedrooms. There is no drawing-room, so we sit and write our letters at a small table in the coffee-room window; but as there are no other staying guests, and no one comes in for meals, we are well content. This afternoon, as we sat resting, I think

I could have counted on my fingers the people who have passed. We look out on a sloping path shaded with trees leading steeply to the Castle grounds. Opposite us is an old red-brick house with a green door and a brass knocker, which last burns as a spot of flame in the sunshine. A black dog lies stretched out asleep on the cobblestones. Halfway up the hill is a drinking fountain: on the wall above it is a shield with the Powys arms—three rampant lions!

This hotel is built partly round a courtyard, and a young man in a dogcart has just driven out from under the archway leading thereto. He is waiting, he says, for Mr. Marshall: will some one tell that gentleman? He speaks three times, but no one appears to pay any heed. Why should they?

'All things have rest: why should we toil alone!'

they seem to say.

Some cocks and hens come strolling by; from the bar comes a steady flow of talk: indeed, they have been talking there all the afternoon, and one wonders dreamily what they are discussing. It can hardly be politics: it sounds too slumbrous. A lovely cool air, mingled with a warm smell of flowering privet, blows in at the window, but the other side of one's nose is aware of the odour of beer and whisky and tobacco. Over the trees on the hillside billows up a soft, white cloud—the first cloud we have seen for two days.

The young man in the dogcart is going to sleep because Mr. Marshall delayeth his coming. The horse gives a lazy stamp now and then. Now a man comes out with a glass of beer and offers it to the young man, but he nobly declines it, and at last he is so tired of waiting outside that he drives back into the inn yard, and we do not see Mr. Marshall after all. This is how life goes on in the county town of Montgomery! But Montgomery is a charming place. In half an hour one has grown to love it. After tea we strolled up to the Castle ruins. The path is steep and, passing a farmhouse, you come out on to a green, turf-covered summit, and there, on the very crown of a promontory, stand a few shattered walls, all that is left of a great Norman castle, once as proud and important as its neighbours of Chirk and Powys!

The eminence on which these ruins stand seems the point or end of a range of hills jutting out into a wide valley which is bounded at some distance by ranges of other hills. Montgomery owes its origin to one Baldwin, Lieutenant of the Marches to William the Conqueror, from whom the Welsh call it Tre Faldwyn. Then came Roger de Montgomery, whom William had made Earl of Shrewsbury, and he took the Castle of Baldwin, perhaps at that time occupied by the Welsh. The powerful Earl of Shrewsbury was to Powysland what the Earl of Chester was to North Wales and the Earl of Hereford

to South Wales. They were to guard the English Border, but more still was it their office to conquer as much of Wales as they conveniently could. Here Roger of Montgomery built a castle, probably larger and more important than that of Baldwin, which very likely had been destroyed, and called it after his own name. The name must give us pause. For its origin we must flit in fancy across the English Channel to the streams and meadows of Normandy, to where, in what was then the diocese of Lisieux and now is part of Calvados, rose once a great castle, the home of this powerful family, who have given their name not only to a Welsh county and town but to districts in Scotland and America. 'This Norman Castle was,' Freeman tells us in his 'History of the Norman Conquest,' 'a fortress reared on the true *Mons Gomerici*, no square donjon but a vast, shell Keep, on a mighty mound, girded by a fosse worthy of the famous spot which it fences in.' Roger was related both to the Conqueror and to Ralph Mortimer and William Fitz-Osbern. He was so great and wealthy a lord that he was able to agree to contribute sixty ships for the invasion of England. At the battle of Hastings he commanded the French soldiers on the right wing, and in reward for his services William made him Earl of Chichester and Arundel, and then Earl of Shrewsbury.

This Roger had a large family by his wife Mabel

MONTGOMERY CASTLE.

of Belême, who was a terrible person. But their tenure of both the earldom of Shrewsbury and of Montgomery was short. In Henry III's time it was held by Hubert de Burgh, and then it seems to have passed to the Mortimers, whose power rose as that of the Montgomerys waned. In 1354 it belonged to Roger Mortimer, Earl of March; then later it passed to the Herbert family, with whom, in the person of the Earl of Powys, it still remains.

Now, that last paragraph contains but a dry statement; but if we could illustrate it by facts, if we, in pageant fashion, could conjure up the scenes that actually occurred, how our nerves would thrill with excitement. For we should have to view siege after siege, wild Welsh and fierce Norman battling for supremacy. That quiet village down below there, now so sleepy, so quiet, so peaceful, was once a walled town. Can it be believed? A walled town with towers, and entered by four gates which Pennant tells us were called Chirbury Gate, Arthur's Gate, Keri Gate and Kedewen Gate. Here, in 1267, came Henry III and Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, and signed a treaty of peace which recognised the said Llewelyn as lawful Prince of Wales. Think what that meeting must have meant to Montgomery! The King and the Prince and the great nobles entertained up here within these Castle walls by the almost princely Mortimer, the train of knights and their attendants

the men-at-arms crowding every house in the town. The noise, the tumult, the flash of armour, the rich colour of mantle and surcoat; the busy service of kitchen and larder, the scolding, the talking, the confusion!

The end of Montgomery Castle came in 1644. There, on a September day, a great battle took place in which the Royalists lost, and then—then, by order of the Commonwealth, Montgomery Castle, less fortunate than its neighbours of Chirk and Powys, was dismantled. So dismantled that there is scarce anything of it left, and it is impossible to trace the foundations of those halls where kings and nobles feasted and revelled. The few crumbling walls that remain stand on the summit of a steep eminence, below which extends a level sward which was probably the courtyard. Then again the hill falls steeply to the plain. Only by a neck of land is the Castle hill connected with the farther range of hills, and this neck has three deep fosses cut across it, each of which probably had a drawbridge.

We sat up there for an hour in the cool evening air. From the village below rose up a little murmur of sound: the barking of a dog, the faint movements of human life in the evening rest. A few children played over the hillocks, where moss and fern and grass have drawn a veil over broken wall and ruined foundation. Will the stir of battle ever

come again? Will the crimson of human blood ever again stain these slopes as they must have been drenched again and again in those old days? The Other One scoffed a little at the idea, but who knows? Would any citizen of Paris, say, in 1868 not have laughed to scorn any prophet who had foretold that in two years their fair city would be ringed round by an enemy's troops, desolated by famine and cold, and deafened by the awful roar of cannon and the bursting of shells?

But we had not come to Montgomery to laze and dream; we had come to look after our Dyke. So next morning we hired a trap and drove three miles to Brompton Hall, and dismissing the driver, we began hunting for our friend. First we came to a tumulus behind a cottage and a mill. It was about twenty feet high and overgrown with beech and birch trees. We scrambled up to the top, which is flat and circular. We could not ascertain if it had ever been opened, or whether it was the tomb of some great Chief, or if it formed the resting-place of the many dead of some forgotten battle. Farther on past the Mill we came to the grounds of Mellington Hall, which is the property of a lady who, we were told, is a strong Conservative and does not approve of the Budget! Here we soon found the Dyke, which we traced all across the Park to where we came into a lane leading to a farm

called Lower Cwm. At this point the Dyke evidently went on, forming the bank and hedge of another lane, and then we could see it striding up the hill beyond. But the heat was too great to continue our walk, and we plodded back to the *Dragon*. In the evening we went again to the Castle and made a sketch which was not so successful as might be wished. But it was very pleasant up there. The sun sank down behind the wooded hill to the West: a purple glow stole all round the horizon; the dew began to fall and a thin mist wrapped the distance in faint hues. The great fragments of the Castle seemed to grow in size and solemnity, and one realised more than at the first visit how strong and magnificent a building it must have been. Our minds went dreamily back to the men and women who had dwelt there. One very haunting form was that of a woman, a woman who must have ruled here once. That Mabel of Belême who was Roger Montgomery's first wife, was a daughter of William Talvas of Belême and Alençon. The house of Talvas was third among the great Norman families, but more than for its wealth and power was it renowned for its wickedness! Even in that not too squeamish age men shuddered at the cruelty and cold-blooded treachery of their crimes. Satan himself had even considered two of its members too wicked to live.

One, the uncle of Mabel, 'was seized and strangled by a fiend'; the other, her only brother, Arnulph, was strangled by a demon in his bed! She herself inherited not only the domains of her father, but his evil disposition. He, being annoyed at the good life and piety of his first wife, Hildeburgis, hired ruffians to murder her on her way to church; and when he married again, he startled the guests at his wedding-feast by cutting off the nose and feet and putting out the eyes of an unsuspecting guest.

Mabel was small in stature, restless, talkative, sagacious, witty and most horribly wicked. She hesitated at no crime which she thought would lead to family advantage. She seems to have murdered and poisoned and robbed without turning a hair. She egged on her husband to cruelties he was not inclined to by nature, and alas! she transmitted to her sons, especially to her eldest son, who is always called Robert de Belême, the tendency to crime and cruelty which she had received from her forebears. But the end came to her at last. One night she was reposing after her bath in her town of Bures, on the Dive, when four men broke into her chamber. They were the four sons of Robert of Jaugy, whom she had robbed, if not murdered. These four men whom she had deprived of their inheritance made short work of the fierce little woman. I think they cut off her head. Then

they fled, pursued by her son Hugh, but they had broken down the bridge, and so escaped to Apulia. The eldest had to flee even to the Infidels to evade vengeance. Her son Robert—Robert the Devil, Robert with the Iron Claws—was so utterly cruel by nature that it even overcame his greed for gold. He refused sometimes to accept ransom for his prisoners because he preferred to watch them die of cold and starvation, and some of his deeds are too ghastly to be related here. He it was who revolted against Henry I and persuaded the Welsh Prince Cadogan to join him. He was, as we have heard, defeated and retired to Normandy, but later on he offended Henry again, and then he was shut up in so close a prison in the Castle of Wareham that no man knew if he lived or died. I think, without being too severe, one can say it was the best place for such a culprit. And he, too, must have stood here and ruled. Perhaps, too, he enlarged these crumbling walls!

The next morning, which was August 12, Grouse Day, we found that Stanford's had sent us the wrong section of the map, so we had to wire for the right one. We went off 'dyking' as soon as we could, and following the Shrewsbury road, we came upon our friend running off both right and left. The southern part was good, with a well-marked fosse, and it seemed to travel

fairly distinctly in the direction of Mellington Hall, and I have little doubt that we could have tracked it till it joined the piece we explored yesterday if we had had energy to do so. But it was too hot to be vigorous, and we turned to the other side of the road and followed our friend into a wood. Here barbed wire and a general tangle of undergrowth gave us pause, but we picked up the line again farther on till a gap divided it from a farm called Rownal. Beyond, further obstructions gave us trouble, so we returned to Rownal, where we found the farmer enjoying a light lunch of green peas, which he gathered and stripped out of their pods. He, good man, was aware of Offa's work, and told us it was much destroyed between this part and Fordun.

'Ah! we have seen it there!' we cried.

'Some years ago,' he continued, 'the farmers joined together to level it; but the Earl's sisters—the old Earl, not the present one—didn't approve, and the destruction was stopped.'

'It seems a pity to destroy such an ancient monument,' we said; 'the land it covers cannot matter greatly!'

'No,' replied our friend, 'it wasn't the land, but it is a great harbour for rabbits!'

Then we remembered how full of burrows it often is, and how we had named one piece the

'Rabbits' Palace'! We also reflected how true it is that there are two sides to every question!

Satisfied that we had seen all that there was of the Dyke in that direction, and linked on our sections satisfactorily, we retraced our steps for a little distance, and then, following some instructions our farmer had given us, crossed some cornfields to the road from Welshpool, along which we had trudged hot and tired two days before. The sun was scorching hot to-day, but a cool wind tempered the heat. The corn was becoming now vividly yellow, and one field of wheat shone a beautiful red orange as its slope rose against a blue, distant hill. When, after some deflections, we reached the road, a cross-lane opened opposite to us, and we plunged along it in search of a place called Hên Domen that we had seen marked in our map as an ancient spot. We came to some cottages, and an aged lady with very white hair informed us that Hên Domen was further on, and that it was 'just some houses.' 'No, there was no old stone or monument that she had ever heard of!'

So on we went and came to a garden where a woman was gathering peas. She repeated the old lady's statement, adding that there were two Hên Domens—farmhouses they were—Davis' Hên Domen and some one else's Hên Domen—Jones I think was the name. Finding at last a patch of shade

large enough for us both to stand in, we again consulted our map and brought Hên Domen to the pin point. We should come to a cross-road and in the angle ought to be our quest. O Blessed Ordnance Map, thou didst not betray us! There, in the very spot where it ought to be, was *our* Hên Domen! Not Davis' Hên Domen, or Jones', but *ours*—a beautiful British Camp, with fosse and vallum, and within the circle a high, steep hill fort. We scrambled up the latter and stood triumphant on its flattened summit, some twenty feet or so in diameter. The fosse and vallum were overgrown with grass and ancient thorn trees.

Again that afternoon we sat and rested in our coffee-room. Again came the flow of talk from the bar and the odour of whisky and tobacco, mingling with privet and mignonette outside, and now and then a footstep, slow and leisurely, woke the echoes of the village street. This is a very old inn; probably its black and white timbers have witnessed many a scene of bloodshed and confusion in the merry old fighting days. It is built round an ancient courtyard, and above, on the slope of the hill, is a garden of which our landlady is very proud. In the house is a quantity of fine old furniture, especially chairs. In the coffee-room all the chairs are armchairs of polished wood,

and there is a row of chairs of different patterns in the corridor upstairs.

On our last day we went to inspect the Church, which is very interesting. Nave, transepts and deep chancel, with an unusual sort of rood-screen —a double arrangement with a pew below and a gallery above. The sexton told us that when a boy he, as one of the Sunday scholars, used to sit up there. There are *miserere* seats in the stalls which were brought—so our guide said—from Chirbury Priory. A very fine alabaster tomb stands in the south transept to Richard Herbert and his wife (*temp.* 1600). On the floor at its side lie two recumbent figures of knights in armour. The sexton told us they were the effigies of Roger Mortimer and the Earl of March, and that they were brought from Chirbury Priory. But on writing to the Rector to confirm this view he tells me that it is not known who they represent, nor is there any record of when they were placed in the Church. As Pennant does not mention them in his description of the Church, it was probably since his time. It is very disappointing not to know anything about them. Well, all one can say is :

> 'The Knight's bones are dust
> And his good sword rust.
> His soul is with the Saints we trust'

—the militant Saints, possibly.

THE KNIGHTS IN MONTGOMERY CHURCH

There is a fine roof and a big, perpendicular window at the east end. In the chancel is a stained-glass window put in to the memory of the wife of a former Rector, evidently a portrait of a sweet-faced lady in a white dress and a purple scarf floating up to Heaven. In the churchyard is the grave of the Robber! A man condemned to death declared himself innocent on the scaffold of the crime for which he was about to suffer, and said that as a sign thereof no grass would ever grow on his grave. A narrow, deep cross, cut in the turf, is shown, and our guide declared that no grass ever does grow there.

We then walked on to Lymore Hall, which is rather disappointing, as it has the appearance of a timbered dwelling, but is only painted to resemble one, being really all of brick; but the gardens and grounds are beautiful with quaint clipped trees and fine sheets of water.

There was a great commotion at our hotel this evening. A large motor party arrived whose accommodation taxed the resources of the hostelry to the utmost. They had not intended to stop here, but one of the motors had come to grief, which necessitated a rest for repairs.

CHAPTER XI

The Way to Clun

ON August 13 we made an early start from the *Dragon*, taking our luggage to the station to book it to Presteign, for which we had to pay the appalling sum of eight shillings. (N.B.—Our luggage is microscopically exiguous.) Then we drove back to the *Dragon*, changed horses, took a very tender farewell of our kind hostess, and started to drive to Church Town. Now, we had had great difficulties to find out anything about Church Town. When we first made inquiries no one had ever heard of it, yet it was plainly marked in the map. But at last a gentleman in the bar, one of the quiet set who carry on that stream of talk which is always gently percolating through its walls, did remember to have heard of it, and, mentioning local names which, though strange to us, proved to his other hearers that Church Town existed, furnished us with some clue to our road. So off we went, our driver much depressed at being desired to conduct what he evidently regarded as a perfectly

insane, if not dangerous, expedition. We drove past Brompton Hall and Mellington Park, and then we began to look at our map. We came to a long hill, and the road was bad. The driver grew more and more lugubrious, the horse—Bob—rather dismal, like his master, kept stopping and pretending he could not get on. We reached the top of the hill at last, and had a fine view of Corndon mountain, which, as you draw nearer, seems to break up into two or three mountains. Then we came on the evident remains of a British Camp, which we found by consulting the map was Caer Dun. There was a farmhouse by its side, and we suggested to our driver that if there was anybody alive in it they might tell him the way. With a depressed sort of grin he did descend, and obtained some information which caused him to turn to the right down a long, winding lane trending towards a great sweep of black forest clothing an abrupt hill.

The scenery grew more wild as we descended into a deep ravine with the dense forest on our left. I have never seen finer scenery in England than this part of Shropshire. Church Town lies in a deep hollow with steep hills rising round it, and a little brook, fringed with yellow mimulus, finds its way through the village, which consists of three small cottages and a tiny Church. It was completely deserted, as the whole population had gone to the

Fair at Bishop's Castle. We tried to get into the Church, but it was locked and there was no one to give us the key. Our driver found a pail, and gave Bob a drink of water, remarking it was very strange there was not a public-house. Then we said farewell to him, and he drove slowly away on his road back to the *Dragon*, and we began to look for the Dyke. We knew it passed through Church Town, but for a few minutes we looked for it in vain. Then we turned round, and there it was behind us, travelling straight down the hill. I think that in all our journey we had no view so impressive as this. The surrounding scenery was so grand, so solemn in its loneliness and character; the line of the Dyke was so straight and the hill so steep. It impressed one with a sense of ancient power and dignity.

The Dyke, of course much broken down, crossed the lane and then marched up the slope in front of us in an equally uncompromising fashion. We followed it and thanked the Saints that the day was cloudy, for it was now a quarter-past eleven and a hot sun would have been undesirable on that steep climb. We went up, and farther up, to the top of the hill: along this part the Dyke was fringed with ancient, twisted birch trees and burrowed through by rabbits. It crossed the summit, where grew a few turnips and a patch of

oats, and then went down again to another hollow valley, where there was a farm called Middle Knuck. Here we found a shady spot, and we sat down to rest and enjoy the sandwiches with which the thoughtful *Dragon* had supplied us. But oh! Misery! Imagine our feelings when we discovered they had been left behind, and here in this lonely spot who could tell how long it would be before they were replaced? However, regrets were unavailing; the Other One was able to produce two small, very small, sticks of chocolate, and after nibbling them, we went up and down another hill, still following the Dyke, when, at the foot of this last hill, it seemed to turn suddenly, making a complete right angle. There was a well-defined trench, and we followed this for some distance till we reluctantly came to the conclusion that we had gone wrong. On consulting the map we found that this was the case, that the Dyke really disappeared at the place where we had left it, and that the line we were following was Skelton's Bank, probably a British Camp.

But now we began to realise that time was passing, that we were very hungry, and that we had a very misty notion as to where we were. We looked round for some sign of human habitation, but there was none, neither farm nor village nor house to be seen. Then our eye caught sight

of a footpath or track of some kind, and we decided to make for that and follow it. It would bring us somewhere! So we cut across some fields and reached the footway, which wound along by a little brook fringed with fine trees. On our left the hills rose with great abruptness, all a tangle of fern and bracken and heather and gorse, while the little brook sang and rippled on our right, half hid in a growth of bushes with meadow-sweet and willow-herb tangling above it. To our great joy the footpath became more marked, and at a turn of the path a dog came running to meet us; we heard a cackling of hens, a quacking of ducks,—indeed, one callow duckling peered at us with outstretched neck.

'Hurrah! there is a cottage!' One cried.

Yes, there was a cottage; there were also ducks, turkeys, chickens and an old, old woman going to feed them with a plate of mysterious mess in her hand. The cottage and farm were called Mount Bank. Here we asked for direction, and because we were very hungry we mentioned the fact, and also asked where food could be obtained. The hint, if hint were intended, which I cannot feel sure of, was ineffective, and we were told that in about a mile and a quarter we might reach Whidcot, where there was no inn, but a shop. Now, if there is only one shop in a village it generally contains

eatables, and our hopes rose; but when we did reach the group of cottages which was Whidcot no shop was to be seen. When we were feeling quite desperate, we saw over a tiny cottage door the inscription 'Grocer and Provision dealer,' so we entered a small kitchen and asked a very diminutive old lady whether she could give us anything to eat. At first she seemed to think not, but on further suggestion she produced bread and butter, one stale bun, and some ginger-beer. We made a really good lunch, for which, after some elaborate calculation, the lady asked the sum of fivepence halfpenny!

After this our way was plain. We threw over the Dyke to find its own way across the hills, and kept to the road. It was very hot, but the walk was very pretty, and at last we reached Clun, the quietest of little villages, with an old grey stone bridge, and the ruins of an ancient castle on a mound by the river. We went to the *Buffalo Hotel*, but there they said they thought the *Jubilee Temperance Hotel* would suit us best. So we went to the *Jubilee*, which looked clean and cosy. There was only a maid in the house, who told us that her mistress was out, but should be fetched. This lady consented to take us in and give us some tea, but remarked incidentally that it would be quite impossible to cook anything that night. There

was a baby, and, as she said with an air of conviction, of course, where there was a baby there was no time for cooking! As we had scarcely eaten anything all day this was distinctly disappointing, but on persuasion she compounded for chops and potatoes, and after discussing these we went early to bed.

CHAPTER XII

Clun

SINCE leaving Llangollen we had come, so it seemed to us, into a land of castles. There was always a castle, or the ruins of a castle, or the site where a castle had been, wherever we stayed. Our thoughts were necessarily driven back to those turbulent days when there was ever fighting on the Border between hostile races; in fact, to the History of Wales!

Poor Wales. It had scarcely held its own in Offa's day, and later on, through the incursions of the Danes, and then by the invasion of Harold during Edward the Confessor's reign, it was almost broken. Griffith ap Llewelyn, who was King of North Wales, had tried by waiting to gain a fortunate time to attack Harold, who had marched to Rhuddlan in the Vale of Clwyd. But the Welsh, who are an impetuous people, did not like their King's tactics, so they cut off poor Griffith's head and brought it as a peace-offering to the Saxon conqueror. They really had very queer notions about patriotism.

Harold accepted the little present graciously, placed the conquered country under Bleddyn and Rhiwallon, half-brothers of poor Griffith, who had been allies of the Saxons, and retired, soon himself to meet his fate on the field of Senlac.

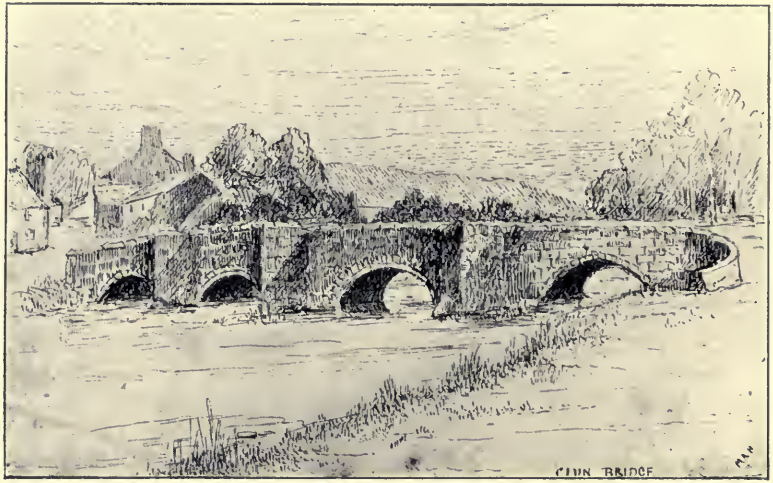
Then came the Norman nobles and sat down along the Border. Hugh the Wolf, Earl of Chester, had many followers all eager for a share of plunder. Hugh sent one Robert, a man more fierce and cruel than himself, along the north coast, and he built a strong stone castle at Rhuddlan, and even pushed on farther to Deganwy, the home of the old royal race of Maelgwyn, who had ruled North Wales since the departure of the Roman power. Its ruins stand above Llandudno still. He was to meet a very tragic end, but that was later on. Then our friend Roger was at Montgomery and Powysland lay open to him, while Fitz-Osbern at Hereford was longing for the upper valley of the Wye. Meantime the Welsh Princes were all fighting and murdering and quarrelling among themselves like so many Kilkenny cats!

But Wales was not to be conquered yet. The moment and the Man came. There was a young exile in Ireland. There generally was in these days an Exile *in* Erin, which country seems also to have been a sort of early dockyard for the supply of fleets and troops for anyone who could pay

for them and lead them off to fight and plunder. It really was a most useful sort of country, and shipbuilding must have been a flourishing industry in Dublin in those days. This young man's name was Griffith ap Conan. His father had been an exile before him. He was of the royal race of Maelgwyn, and in his wanderings he had fallen in love with and married a Princess! Her name was Rhagvel, and her father was a sea-king, half Irish and half Dane, and it was their son who was to push back the Norman conquest for a couple of centuries. Griffith traced his descent from Maelgwyn and Rhodri; his forebears had worn red tunics, which seems to have been a royal distinction. This young man had a most strenuous career. He had to retire more than once to the charms of the Bay of Dublin. Once he was caught by the Normans and carried prisoner to Chester. The manner of his release from that durance strikes one as somewhat comic. 'Once,' says Mr. Edwards in his 'History of Wales,' 'a man of Edeyrnion went to Chester to trade, and there he saw his king, Griffith ap Conan, in chains. It was a merry time in Chester and the wards of port and wall were drunk. He took his king on his back, carried him safely home and hid him till he was strong enough to walk.' This gives really rather an entrancing picture of the manners and customs of

the good old times; it also reminds one of more than one of the northern Border ballads, a form of verse in which, for all their bards, the Welsh are lamentably wanting.

It is impossible here even to sketch the wild tumult of warfare which make up this period of Welsh history. The Norman nobles, the Montgomerys, the Mortimers, the Fitzhamons, the Marshalls, the Osberns, the Clares, sway to and fro in fight with Griffith ap Conan, Rhees ap Tudor, Owens and Cadogans and Maredudds. Now the Welsh Princes are joined together to repel the Normans, now some side with the latter and betray their own countrymen. Normans marry Welsh Princesses, and the daughters of Normans become the wives of Welsh Chieftains. The Normans build castles wherever they can get a foothold; the Welsh burn them, and then in their turn learn the art of military architecture. It would take volumes to disentangle the twisted strands, to follow the changes, to trace the careers of these great Welsh and English families. All one can do is to try and attach to these places as we visit them some fragment of the history of the past, to endow these grey ruins with some touch of human interest, to arouse if possible some echoes of the dramas of passion and grief, of love and hate, which have been enacted here, to awake some chords of



CLUN BRIDGE

the 'low sad music of humanity,' the dim old harmonies, or perhaps rather discords, of the loves and sorrows that have wrought themselves out here; to conjure up, if possible, some of the colour, the gorgeous, marvellous scenes of those flamboyant days.

Nothing can be much quieter than Clun at the present day. The village, with its two or three shops, clusters above the rippling little river, which is crossed by an old stone bridge which has an air of great antiquity. We went out after our tea, and after buying some postcards and despatching them to friends, we crossed this bridge and went up a sloping road to the churchyard.

The Church is fine. The nave and aisles are divided by Norman pillars with cushion capitals and slightly pointed arches. The lofty chancel seems of later date, and has a three-light lancet window. On the south side, above the main arcade, is a clerestory of small, round-headed windows, but there are none on the north side; there the aisle roof is as high as the nave. A fine lofty, modern rood-screen shuts off the chancel and end of the north aisle, which has a second altar in it. On the wall is a very curious old coat-of-arms in stone.

The tower is enormous in girth, but low. It has a very ancient, nail-studded door. We met a lady in the churchyard who told us that once it

had been ornamented with the skins of Welshmen who had been caught this side of the Dyke (Clun is in Shropshire), and that little bits of the interesting material can be detected by the discerning eye. But my optic powers were not sufficiently acute to see them, nor do I think those of the Other One were more penetrating.

It was a lovely, cool, quiet evening, softly clouded and full of that deep feeling of peace and rest, and yet of gentle melancholy, which some summer evenings possess. It was like Gray's 'Elegy.' A great hush lay upon the landscape. As we re-crossed the bridge we saw three ladies sketching, and charming subjects one could find here. Then we strolled up to the Castle, which stands on a mound by the river, a mound which may be partly artificial. There is not much left. The principal part is a rectangular building where there have been large windows (for a castle) and which has been divided up into stories; the holes where the beams rested are quite evident. The base of this part rises straight up from the moat—thus, as it were, walling up that part of the mound—and there are some other fragments of crumbling walls. The ground is left open, and is evidently the recreation place of the youth of Clun. On the turf a girl lay gazing up into the depths of the sky, another sat by her reading. Yes, Clun, like

Montgomery, is a lovable place, full of charm, of stillness, of pensive beauty.

This Castle and lordship came by marriage to the Fitz-Alans, of whom we have heard at Oswestry and Whittington. The Barony of Clun, or Colunwy, was founded by Picot de Sai, a Norman follower of our old friend Roger of Montgomery. He seems to have hailed from the village of Sai, near Exmes, in the Orne. He married a Welsh Princess, daughter of Cadogan ap Bleddyn. Then seems to have come a Helias de Sai. His daughter Isabella married William Fitz-Alan and brought this fair Castle as her dowry. The 'noble and liberal young man' whom Giraldus saw at Oswestry must have been her son or grandson.

Sitting among the ruins in the quiet evening air one longed to know something of this lady, something tangible, something of her real self, her thoughts, her daily life. Doubtless she looked after her household, and housekeeping in those days must have required much forethought, so as not to run out of necessary stores. Then she had her maidens to train and teach, and keep well employed. The last probably was not difficult as regards needlework, when everything had to be made at home. Did she pay proper attention to her dress and was she anxious to learn what was the last thing in wimples, and if sleeves were still

worn long and knotted? Did she send to London and to the great Fair of St. Giles at Winchester: to buy sugars and spices, silks from Sicily, and linen from Ypres? Was she devout, and did she embroider stoles and vestments for the priests of the Church over there across the river? It may have been a-building in her day. What view did she take, I wonder, of the custom of ornamenting the Church door with the skins of Welshmen? Did it give her 'a turn' to see them there, freshly put on, perhaps, when she went to Mass? It is sad to think how many interesting things there are which we shall never know anything about!

That evening at Clun remains for some reason very clearly pictured in the memory. It is a place we would like to go and stay at again for a longer period.

But we had not come to Clun to dream about castles and their inhabitants, but to follow that terrible Dyke. We had left it at Whidcot, a mile or so outside of Clun, and now we had to pick it up again and trace it over the hills to Knighton and Presteign. We were rather excited about this day's walk: we knew it must be beautiful, for we had to cross a wild stretch of country which was labelled on the map as Clun Forest, and where we could see few names of villages or houses. As the way promised to be long, we took the precaution of

ordering a conveyance to take us as far as possible, and next morning at eight o'clock we said farewell to the *Jubilee Hotel*, and started in a little wagonette with a good horse and a cheerful and intelligent young driver, very different from the depressed youth who had driven us out of Montgomery. We asked him to drive us to Springhill, and he knew the spot at once. Off we went up a hill which lengthened out and out till we were high up and higher and higher still. Splendid views spread out on all sides, moor and hill and distant mountains and great woods of firs which take the most wonderful indigo hues, almost black at times, as the shadows of the clouds sweep across them. The road became a rough cart track bordered with furze and bramble, wild raspberry and bracken, purple knapweed and tall, stately thistles. At last we seemed to be on the top of the world, with a cool, fresh breeze sweeping huge white clouds across the sky and dappling all the hills with swift changes of light and colour. As we crept up the hill the driver told us how terribly cold it was up here in the winter. How one day he had driven the Doctor, when the Doctor's horse had been ill. How he had had to wait first at one place and then at another till he had been almost perished. How, at last, the Doctor had a message calling him to a place to which there was no proper road, and

had borrowed a pony at the farm which we were now approaching, and had left him there with the gig till he returned. How the farmer had let him put his horse up in the stable, and had asked him to come in to the fire, and how the farmer's wife had made him some tea, which he thought was very kind. It gave one an insight into the career of a country doctor, and of the lonely life among the hills.

But at this farm we had to part, and we said good-bye to our young friend. He was a very nice young fellow, and I hope he will find many people to be kind to him. Close by the farm we were overjoyed to find our Dyke; very tall and strong, all grown over with larch and spruce trees, with a perfect forest of foxgloves on the more open side. We set off along his broad back and followed him out of the firwood on to the open moor, where he went soaring away south through bracken and gorse and heather and all the splendour of a wild, open country, with mountains and blue hills rising around in the distance. Here and there on the slope of some valley we saw an enclosed field or two, but otherwise there was only one sign of civilisation—one sign, but a bad one for us—and that was the iniquity of barbed wire. Why, in the name of all that is wonderful, do they want to turn those beautiful open moors into traps and snares? We tried one way and then another. We got immersed in bracken

OFFA'S DYKE NEAR CLUN.

up to our very eyes; we went backwards and forwards, frightening sheep and scaring rabbits into fits, but everywhere that terrible obstruction met us, for it was laced in and out in a perfectly fiendish manner. At last we caught sight of an open green track winding like a ribbon over the hill, and sadly we had to leave our Dyke and make for that. It was but a bit of moor edged with barbed wire for a trimming, but to our relief it ran nearly parallel with the Dyke, on which we were able to keep our eye.

It is difficult to convey in words an adequate idea of the beauty of that walk. The sense of altitude, the sweeping airs, the lovely scents, the views around of mountain and valley, coomb and ravine. Our souls went singing if our voices were silent, a great psalm of thanksgiving, an *Omnia opera.* Once I was told that this joy in wild nature was a remnant of savagery, a trace of the barbarian that had not been properly extirpated. Well, if so, I am thankful to my ancestors for preserving and transmitting it to me!

At last we were across the moor and we came to a fir plantation, where the road left off its greenness and took a downward turn, while below us we saw a farmhouse. Was it Garbett Hall? We went and knocked at the door, and it was opened by a woman of whom we had asked our way in Clun the evening before. Yes, this was Garbett Hall and

that below was Selley Hall, and our way lay past it. She seemed very pleased to see us, and wanted to give us an epitome of her personal history, but the Other One grew impatient at the delay. We were still able to see the line of the Dyke, and when we reached Selley Hall, a large farmhouse beautifully situated on the slope of the hill, we saw it, as we thought, clambering up the other side of the valley. Should we go after it or should we not? It was very hot, and we were rather tired, but conscience pricked. Then we saw the farmer—at least, we think it was the farmer—and consulted him. Yes, that was the Dyke, and he thought we could get along it. No, he didn't fancy there was any barbed wire, and there were gates. One was a broken gate, but he thought we could manage, and it would lead us down to Knighton.

So we went off down a steep grass field, where we came upon a vallum and lines of encampment—so they seemed to us—which we had not observed from the road. Across a brook, and up along a steep field to a cottage, to a quite clear footpath, and the broken gate and the Dyke above us. On we went quite happily. We could see the road below us, and we rejoiced to be out of its dust and motors and on the green hillside. The country was much less wild now, but very rich and beautiful with hanging woods and green pastures, while the

hill on our side was fringed with bracken and gorse. We thought we were getting close to Knighton here, so it was rather a cruel blow when we came to a cottage and interviewed a very untidy young woman who told us that we were still three and a half miles from that town. Though she was untidy, that young woman was very kind and civil, and took a great deal of trouble to explain the road and where a field path would cut off some of the way. We were to go down through the meadow and turn to the left, and pass some cottages called the Green, and a gentleman's house in an orchard, and we were *not* to turn up by the wheelwright's, and then we should come to the stile and that would save us half a mile. Her directions were quite accurate, and we arrived at the stile and footpath, which not only saved us half a mile but gave us as pretty a walk as the heart of woman could desire. For it led us down to a little rippling river—the Teme, I think—with its banks sprinkled with beautiful old oak trees, and we quite fell in love with Knighton. Nearer the village we met with an ancient dame who was struck almost dumb with surprise when, on asking some question, she discovered that we had never been in Knighton before! She could hardly credit the statement, and we left her wondering!

We found a delightful inn at Knighton, where

we rested and had a most refreshing lunch. Now, had we known it, we ought to have stayed at Knighton rather than at Presteign, whither we were bound. We found out later that the Welsh name for Knighton is *Tref-y-Clawdd*, or the town on the Dyke. Offa's work really passed through it, and there is a fine British Camp near. But of this we had been ignorant, and to Presteign we had to get, to pick up 'our carriages' and spend Sunday. Now, we knew there was a railway at Knighton and also at Presteign. What easier than to go the six miles by train? But lo! though there *is* a station at each place, and the distance between them is but six and a half miles, we learnt to our bitter grief that they are on different systems, and you have to go half round Wales if you take the train to journey from one to the other. What, then, can we do? The *Swan* said we must order a trap. It was six and sixpence each person! Confusion take the six and sixpence! we cried, as our spirit rose in revolt. We will foot it—every step of the way; and so we did. Up a hill as long as the hill Difficulty we trudged, down again—up again—on the top we investigated an uncertain bit of Dyke. Past Norton Church, into which we peeped, past a tumulus or mound, on—on—on—trudge, trudge, trudge! Over a bridge, along a footpath which we thought would shorten the way but didn't, till at last we stood

before an ancient hostelry all black and white timber outside and dark oak panelling in, where we got rooms for the night, thankful for rest and food and coolness after the heat and strenuous exertions of the day.

CHAPTER XIII

Presteign

PRESTEIGN is a small town and did not strike us as being so attractive as some other places. But there may be some other reason to account for our being a little depressed while there. The hotel we were at was carried on in a very singular way, and I must confess we were far from comfortable. But one must expect these little ups and downs in a Pilgrimage.

The day after we had arrived was Sunday, and we duly went to Church. It is a fine and interesting building: nave and aisles, chancel, and a fine and massive tower. There are signs that a more ancient church existed where the north aisle now stands. There is a good modern screen and beautiful early Perpendicular windows in the chancel. It is a lofty, light, airy building. There is a good, incised, floriated cross under a low arch in the north aisle. After the service we waited to look round the Church, and found the old clerk also waiting to distribute bread to widows. He told us he was a cooper by

trade and used to work almost day and night in cider time, and employed journeymen too; but now he had almost nothing to do. There is not half the cider made, and the zinc manufacture has robbed him of the other kinds of work. No one wants wooden washing tubs or bowls or churns now. It seems rather sad how the old village trades are all dying away. The ready-made clothes have slain the village tailor, and the ready-made boots the village shoemaker; it is inevitable, but it is sad, and plays its part in driving the country people into the towns.

We sat indoors that afternoon in the oak-pannelled parlour and wrote letters and diaries. Our hotel is quite a show-place, and parties of ladies and gentlemen, the former swathed in motor veils, keep coming in to be taken over the house. The cicerone informed them that King Charles had been here—she did not seem quite clear whether it was Charles I or Charles II—that there was a secret staircase, and that the place had belonged to 'that dreadful Bradshaw who was the first to cut off King Charles' head.' She did not mention who the second to perform that act had been, but the name Bradshaw is still to be seen under a bell communicating with a certain chamber. One would have thought that the owner's principles would have been enough to make either King give the house a wide berth! It is, however, said that

the house was built by a Bradshaw, brother of the famous John. Charles I passed by this town in 1645, after the battle of Naseby, and he slept—not in this house—but at a farm called The Lower Heath, near Presteign.

Behind the hotel is a large bowling-green, where that extremely leisurely game is played on week-days. It seems a favourite game in Wales: most of the inns we have stayed at possess a green. Our host sits out in this garden most of the time while his wife and nephew do the work, assisted by a gay young maiden who comes in by the day.

In the evening we went to church again, and then walked down to the bridge over the river, which last looks rather dirty. It is not so pretty as either Clun or Knighton, but it is interesting in one way. It is the River Llugg, and it was on the banks of the Llugg that the body of Ethelberht was first hurriedly buried after his treacherous murder by King Offa. Was it, then, somewhere in this neighbourhood that Villa Australis stood, where the Saxon King held his court ?

We then walked up to the Warden, which is said to have been the site of a castle. It is a lofty mound overgrown with trees, and forms the recreation ground of the town. It certainly must have been used for defensive purposes in the old days. We wandered about for some time, but the evening

was dull and close, and the whole scene dark and sombre with an oppressive heavy heat and not a breath of air to stir a leaf.

Next morning, August 10, was dull and grey after a close, hot night. We started after our Dyke about half-past nine. We had left him on the hill above Knighton and should pick him up again past a little village named Discoed. The road led along the valley, and we had a very pretty view of the winding river and the great hills beyond. At Discoed is a tiny church in a pretty little churchyard, with monthly roses blooming along the path from the gate. We obtained the Church key at a picturesque old farmhouse close by, and went in, but there was nothing special to see, so we returned the key and went on farther till we struck our Dyke crossing the road, and we turned in beside it. It soon developed into a fine, lofty, well-defined piece, and we followed along it till it plunged into a larchwood, well wired up. Here we were obliged to quit it, though we could see the direction it took. We were high up now and the view was beautiful, especially over towards the Radnorshire hills. The grey mist had swept up from the west and veiled them in soft, semi-transparent folds of vapour, through which shot gleams of silvery light, and the great trees hung in masses of darkness against the vivid green turf and bracken. Now we had to descend a

steep hill and that led us into a narrow, Devonshire-like lane which went steeply up past a few cottages and so into a broader road. On consulting our map we found that this road farther on crossed the Dyke (the Dyke had gone careering off over a hill to our left) and that near that spot was marked an ancient British Camp called Castle Ring, for which we made. Of course, we could not find it, but we came to a farm, Pen Offa, where we made inquiries, and a very handsome and charming woman came out to speak to us. She had a lovely baby in her arms, and round her clustered four other children all greatly resembling their mother. As they stood looking up at us with their beautiful dark eyes, grouped around her, it would have been hard to find a prettier picture.

Our kind friend at once offered to show us the way to Castle Ring, and led us through a beautiful bit of woodland with fine oaks and all the ground carpeted with broad fronds of bracken, among which the children hid and then jumped out to pretend to startle us. Castle Ring proved to be a circular space surrounded by a fosse and vallum, but it is not very clearly defined, being so overgrown. It is curious that the wealthy people who own these ancient places seem to take so little interest in them. With a very little trouble the fern and brambles could be cleared away and the

formation of the Camp shown, while a little excavation might be rewarded by discoveries of much interest.

Then our guide pointed out Old Radnor Church and showed us which was Radnor Forest, steep, fir-clad hills looming black through the mist, and then she went quite a long way with us to point out the best way to return to Presteign. The children scampered along through the fern, one jolly little fellow of four, in a blue blouse, being specially anxious to frighten us by his sudden bounces out of the fern. Their mother told us that the eldest, the only girl, was ten; the three biggest went to school at Whitton, three and a quarter miles distance, so the mites walk nearly seven miles each day. There was a school nearer, but they did not get on there; at the end of two years they hardly knew their letters, so they sent them to Whitton, and they were doing better.

We said good-bye at last, giving the children some pennies to buy sugar-plums, and, following the track pointed out, we had a glorious walk over wild hills. At one point, being a little uncertain of our way, we asked a man we fortunately met, and he gave us further instructions and told us of a shorter path, illustrating his meaning by crooking his arm and drawing an imaginary line from his shoulder to his wrist. Such a nice man he was,

with a kindly, merry face, and we immediately made up our minds that he was the father of those charming children.

After our tea we went for a walk to Stapleton Castle. It is said to have been the residence of one Elias Walwyn, who was one of the people who betrayed and murdered poor Llewelyn, the last Prince of Wales, in 1282. We found it finely situated on the summit of an abrupt hill, but the ruins that remain must be of much later date and give the idea of a large residential mansion more than of a feudal castle. As we returned the country looked very beautiful. The low sun was shining clear and bright in the West, but opposite lay a bank of black clouds across whose dark masses strange swirls of white, smoke-like vapour swept and curled. A dark, wooded hill rose on the horizon, with a field of golden barley bright with sunlight below it.

When we returned to our hotel we were electrified by being told that they had been unable to procure anything for our dinner except ham. We protested, but they swore by all their gods that in the whole town of Presteign, which numbers some twelve hundred inhabitants, there was not a morsel of meat to be obtained, nor a duck, nor a chicken. This last was exceeding strange, for you can hardly walk out without tumbling over little families of

cocks and hens. But so it was, and we sat down to a meal of indifferent ham and crude preserved apricots, which was all that ancient town could produce, apparently, to entertain travellers. But we had our doubts as to whether the land was so barren as was represented.

CHAPTER XIV

Hereford

ON August 17 we left the uncomfortable hostelry at Presteign and arrived at Hereford. It was a bright sunny day and the pretty town looked its very best to welcome us. We were advised to seek accommodation in Castle Street. 'A very classy place,' remarked our informant; 'you will get suited there, I should think!' And very soon, to our great relief, we were suited, and found ourselves most comfortably settled. Here, too, the Third Party met us with her cycle, which she had been pushing up and down hill in Yorkshire.

It was hard to realise what a stormy past history belongs to this little city, which has probably continued from the time of Offa. That King had a residence near here at a place called Sutton. Now, this is 'South Town,' and probably the 'Villa Australis' where Ethelberht was murdered. It was near Hereford that Augustine summoned the Welsh Bishops to a conference, for Wales was a Christian country long before his mission. The

Welsh Church maintained its independence of Rome till A.D. 809, and it was not till 1198 that the four Welsh dioceses finally submitted to the primacy of Canterbury.

To Hereford Owen Tudor was brought after the battle at Mortimer's Cross, and there he was beheaded in the Market Place, trusting we are told 'on pardon and grace till the collar of his red doublet was ripped off. Then he said "that head shall lie on the block that was wont to lie on Queen Catherine's lap," and put his heart and his mind wholly unto God and full meekly took his death!'

In the Civil War Hereford stood for the King, and was taken and retaken repeatedly, until the Castle and Walls were finally demolished by the Parliament troops under Colonel Birch. The Castle and Walls are gone, but there are a large number of the beautiful black and white timbered houses left, the finest of all being now occupied by Lloyd's Bank.

Of course, the chief glory of Hereford is the Cathedral, and from our rooms in the 'classy' street we had the beautiful tower of rose-red stone, with its profusion of ball flower ornament, always in sight.

Nothing is known of the foundation of the first Church at Hereford. In A.D. 544 we hear of a

Bishop of Hereford as being present at the Synod of Caerleon, 'Dubric, the high Saint,' mentioned in Tennyson's 'Idylls,' and tradition holds that the Church had been founded two years previously by Geraint, the cousin of King Arthur. The unbroken line of Bishops begins with Putta, translated from Rochester in A.D. 676. In 1012 the Church was rebuilt by Bishop Athelstan and dedicated to the murdered Saint Ethelberht, whose body was transferred to it. Very soon after its completion in 1055, all Hereford, including Athelstan's new Cathedral, was burnt to the ground by Algar, Earl of Mercia, who was fighting the English in alliance with the Welsh King, Griffith. Edward the Confessor sent Harold with a great army to avenge the insult. Algar was propitiated, and Griffith was treacherously slain by his own people. In 1079 Robert de Losinga began to rebuild the Cathedral, which was completed in 1145, though the clerestory and part of the choir were added later; there were subsequent additions, and the beautiful central tower was only finished in 1320. Almost every phase of English architecture is represented, from the earliest Norman to the late Perpendicular in the north porch; and even more modern work, unfortunately, in the restorations by Wyatt.

On entering the building, we were first impressed by the Norman nave with its rich decoration, and

also by the fine modern windows. The west window commemorates Queen Victoria, and contains figures of angels and English Saints. Another, in memory of Sir Gore Ouseley, shows four figures bearing musical instruments—David, Asaph, Miriam, and Deborah.

Passing into the south transept we noted the many tombs of Bishops, for Hereford can boast of more Bishops' tombs than any other cathedral, thirty-four prelates being buried here. Fastened to the wall is the Mappa Mundi. In this map, which dates from 1300, Jerusalem occupies the centre of the round, flat earth, and on it are portrayed all the wonderful fabulous races of men and animals mentioned by Mandeville, and generally believed in at the time.

There is a beautiful Chantry Chapel built by Bishop Audley in 1492. It has fine fan vaulting, and is adorned with shields bearing the emblems of the Passion and other devices. Bishop Audley's tomb is outside the Chapel, which is occupied by a predecessor, Richard de Capella.

In the north transept we saw the shrine of Thomas de Cantilupe, the most notable of all the Hereford prelates, a great figure, Chancellor of England, bishop and saint. He ruled his diocese with a mighty hand. No woman, however old or ill-favoured, was allowed within his palace. Such

was his orthodoxy that when the King wished to allow a converted Jew to give evidence against some Christian miscreant, Cantilupe begged with tears to leave the Council rather than connive at such an outrage. When Earl Gilbert of Gloucester came hunting on the Hereford side of the Malvern Hills, Cantilupe forced him to withdraw, and a deep trench on the top of the hill still marks the limit of Earl Gilbert's sport. After a dispute with the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the course of which he was excommunicated, Cantilupe proceeded to Italy to plead his cause with the Pope in person, and died at Orvieto in 1282. His bones were transferred to Hereford Cathedral, and hundreds of miracles were performed at his shrine; but he was not canonised until 1320, the last Englishman to receive this distinction. The shrine is a beautiful example of Early Decorated work.

The crypt of Hereford is the latest built under a cathedral in England with the exception of St. Paul's. The stalls in the choir are very fine, and the screen designed by Sir Gilbert Scott has been called the most splendid piece of metal work in the world. The two cloisters, the Bishops' and the Vicars' cloisters, are on the south side of the Cathedral. Between them stood the decagonal Chapter House, a beautiful building of which only one side remains. Its destruction was begun during the Civil War by

the cannon of the troops on the other side of the river, and very thoroughly completed by the Dean and Chapter.

A low porch leads into the Vicars' cloister. This is surrounded by a corridor and the houses inhabited by the lay vicars.

One evening we visited the Hospital, which was built from the remains of a monastery of Black Friars. The preaching Cross, or pulpit, from which the Friars addressed the people, stands in the grounds. Our cicerone was the Corporal of the Brethren, an old gentleman in a scarlet coat and breeches, with leggings of the same colour, and obliged to use crutches on account of being disabled from sciatica. He told us that the Hospital was founded by Lord Coningsby in 1597. There are eleven houses, allotted to four soldiers, four sailors and three gentlemen's servants, who are unable to work. They have each a two-roomed house, a small garden, and £1 1*s.* 8*d.* per month. The ruins are very graceful, in Early English style. Our friend showed us the Hospital Chapel, which is very plain, where service is held twice a week, and also a dark and unpleasant apartment which he called the Great Hall, where the Brethren dine together on January 6. His own little room, with a bright fire burning, looked very cosy and comfortable.

The old Church of All Saints is very interesting. It stands on the site of an older church, and many of the pillars are built round the beautiful clustered columns with stiff leaf capitals of the former foundation.

The old tower is incorporated in the Church. One of its pillars is tremendously out of the perpendicular; but this is a defect of long standing, and has been remedied by building an enormous buttress, so that, as Sir Gilbert Scott stated, it is now 'as firm as the rock of Gibraltar.' The old roof is of wood, and the *Miserere* seats are very ancient and beautiful. There is a tall, upright recess in the chancel to hold the processional Cross. We were told that this contrivance is only found in two other places in England—New College, Oxford, and in a church at Weymouth.

We were shown some ancient tiles from which the modern tiles that pave the chancel were copied. Then we were taken to the vestry to see the chained library. Each book is attached by a chain to a horizontal bar, and these bars are fastened to a perpendicular bolt at one end. We looked at the 'History of the World,' by Sir Walter Raleigh, 'Eikon Basilike,' an old Huguenot Bible with fascinating pictures, notably one of the man with the beam in his eye—a substantial wooden beam three feet long—and many others. There was also an

old hour-glass. The pulpit is a good specimen of Jacobean work.

After our exploration of the Church we went to see the house where Garrick was born, now an inn called the *Raven*. Strolling on we came to a large open space where a cattle and horse fair was being held. We saw a cow sold for £13, and a beautiful cart-horse was being shown off to an admiring circle. Only seven of these fairs are held in the year.

On August 19 we took an early train for Credenhill station to go look for our Dyke, which we had been rather neglecting. It was a lovely day, and the pretty village looked perfectly charming. It really was a most fascinating village: every house had a garden, and every garden was crammed with brilliant blossoms. The best of all was at the station. We were told that it was managed by a signalman, and that it was the finest in the district. The beds were a mass of flowers planted quite close together but without any disorder or confusion, and yet not stiff. Pentstemons, the finest I have ever seen, snapdragons, gladioli, coreopsis, nemesia, and a very handsome blue phacelia, and many others, all arranged to show their colours to the best advantage. As we walked from the station we had a wooded hill in front of us, once a British Camp. It is 750 feet high and has very deep trenches. We had not time to explore it, but it was evidently of similar character

to Old Oswestry. We came at last to the Church, which seems to stand in private ground. It is extremely interesting. The windows are Early English and Decorated. The stone chancel arch is of unusual form, consisting of three open arches separated by pillars. The southern one has a squint through it. But the gem of the Church is the fourteenth-century glass window with the figures of Thomas à Becket and Thomas Cantilupe. In the inscription one 'Thomas' does duty for the two prelates, thus :

'CANTUAR. THOMAS. CANTILUPE.'

Leaving the Church, we made our way back towards the station and began to walk westwards in the direction of the Dyke. On our way we passed Kenchester, the site of the Roman Magna Castra, but we did not succeed in making out the Camp. Then we followed a pretty lane till we came to Bridge Sollers, where there is a bridge over the Wye. Here is a Church which, in Murray, is described as Early Decorated, but which appeared to us to be unmistakably Saxon. The principal doorway had every mark of Saxon architecture. When we asked for the key at a neighbouring farmhouse we were told that it hung on a nail in the porch. There were no nails in the porch and no keys hanging on them, and we were about to give up in despair, when at last the Other

WINDOW CREDENHILL CHURCH

One climbed on the bench and discovered the key on the top of the doorpost, and we entered. Decorated, indeed! The arches were round and the columns early Norman with cushion capitals, and the tower arch was Saxon. This Church, unlike any other we have seen in this tour, was very dirty and neglected. The boards had holes in them, and there were common tin sconces nailed to the walls. Oh, the pity of it, for the Church, apart from its sacred character, is a most interesting monument from its style and antiquity.

Murray's guide-book is wrong here also about the Dyke, which it states is close to the Church. It is not! After searching for it for some time we consulted an old gentleman, who told us that it was some way farther on near a white cottage.

We found the cottage and then the Dyke. It is not very good here, and runs down immediately to the river, where we saw it continued on the opposite side. Now we consulted the map in order to decide whether we should walk on to Moorhampton or back to Credenhill, and finding that the latter was rather the nearer, made for that, and reached it in time to have a pleasant talk with the station-master about his beloved garden.

CHAPTER XV

Ross and Goodrich

WE left Hereford early, and reached Ross about half-past ten. At first we went to Wye Street to try for apartments, and a pretty part it is, with nice, bright-looking houses and the river winding below them through green meadows, with hills and woods beyond. But every place was full to overflowing. We had not realised what a favourite holiday spot Ross is, and we trudged for two long hours in a drizzling rain about the town before we found any accommodation, and of what we eventually discovered perhaps the less said the better! Only we sadly regretted our happy time in the 'classy' street in Hereford.

But Ross is a pretty and attractive place, even under these adverse circumstances. It stands on a hill above the 'babbling Wye,' only here, at any rate, the Wye does not babble, but glides gently and quietly along. There is a very picturesque Market House, supported on round pillars and arches of pale red sandstone. Though I believe it is not

really very ancient, it has acquired a worn and venerable appearance from being built of sandstone. We had to remain indoors for the rest of that day, for the rain poured down steadily all the afternoon and evening.

The next morning, to our joy, was fine, and we took the train to Kerne Bridge to see Goodrich Castle. A clergyman in the carriage told us to look out for the remains of a Cistercian Abbey at a farm we should pass on our way, and we found it. Evidently the Chapel of the Abbey is now the barn, or, rather, cowshed and stable. The windows are Pointed with the remains of beautiful tracery. The west doorway and window above remain. The tiled roof is supported on massive posts, and a place for the great wooden door of the barn has been broken through the north wall. Everywhere were traces of ancient walls and buildings. Inside there was straw and chaff and the general litter of a stable or cowhouse. It seemed rather sad to see what had been evidently a beautiful building raised for the praise and worship of God put to such base uses.

Then we went on to find Goodrich Castle, and there, at the entrance, found the Third Party waiting, for she had ridden over on her cycle. She was rather wondering what had become of us, as she had not been aware of the Cistercian Abbey.

The entrance to the Castle is attained by a

wooden bridge which crosses the moat where once was a drawbridge. The gate towers looked very perfect, and then a long passage led between them, with arrangements for more than one portcullis. Here we rang a bell, and soon we heard a hurried footstep, and a little gentleman, who had a voice and manner exactly resembling those of a French friend of ours, came scurrying up. He let us in and began to explain that he was going around with a party, and would we join them or wait—'Do just as you like, ladies!' We decided to go round with the party, which proved to consist of a clergyman and about a dozen young men. We had seen them get out of the train at the station.

The long entrance under the gate towers admits to the courtyard of the Castle, and first we were taken to the Chapel, which is on the east side. The building consisted of three floors, of which the middle one was the Chapel proper, but only a narrow portion of the floor, really a part of the thickness of the wall, is left. Here we found the party drawn up, and we cautiously edged our way in among them, for the position was somewhat precipitous. Then our guide resumed his explanation of the building. The east window he declared to be Tudor, and was inserted in what is an Edwardian building. A rood-screen must have crossed the Chapel, for there are the marks where it was supported, and also a staircase

and door leading to it. On this rood-screen it is supposed there must have been two small altars, as there are two piscinas, one on each side. There is a piscina at the east end and sedilia for the chief altar. Beneath the Chapel there must have been a cellar, not a crypt, as there is no sign of vaulting. Above the Chapel on the highest floor was probably the priest's chamber, as there is a fireplace.

We were then conducted to the Banqueting Hall on the opposite side of the courtyard. On our way the charming view of the Wye seen through two slender Early English arches was pointed out with much rhetorical declamation. The Banqueting Hall is fine, with long, pointed windows; the remains of the daïs at one end and the Buttery hatch and door side by side at the other, with a smaller door on one side. There had evidently been a screen across and a Minstrels' Gallery over it, hiding the Buttery hatch from the assembled guests. A fine view of Goodrich Court through one of the long windows was enthusiastically dwelt on by our guide. The arches over the Buttery doors have sharp angles like the arches in the north transept of Hereford Cathedral.

From here we were led through the smaller of the doors into what our guide declared to have been a cellar under the kitchen. It was filled up with ten feet of débris—so said our guide—as the window

is on a level with the floor, or rather, the earth overgrown with weeds and bushes. Our cicerone lamented that the lady to whom the Castle belonged does not have it excavated, as doubtless many curios —coins, weapons, what not—would reward such a search. Then he led us back into the Banqueting Hall to show us 'the gem of the Castle'! This was the untouched Norman window, with a recessed double arch, high up in the Keep, of which you get a fine view through one particular gap in the wall of the Banqueting Hall.

'A Norman window, ladies and gentlemen, with a recessed double arch and a little supporting pillar. Quite unrestored and perfect—but the little pillar is unsafe!'

The Keep, which is much the oldest part remaining, has the flat Norman buttresses, and is to a certain height in fine preservation. It really looks less worn than some of the later masonry, for it is not built of sandstone.

Now we were taken across the quadrangle to an octagonal tower on the south-east. Here were to be seen fireplaces in the upper rooms and what our friend termed 'secular piscinas.' About these he entered into elaborate explanations.

'They are openings through the wall,' he said, 'and on the outside are masked by a gargoyle. Then you see when they washed their faces—and

they did wash their faces in those days—the water was thrown out through these apertures. They are not ecclesiastical piscinas for then the drain always goes down into the earth.'

He also pointed out that all the windows had seats to them, convenient for flirting! Further, he descanted on the Carnarvon arch which is used so much at Carnarvon, whence its name, and proves the age of much of this Castle where it is found.

At this point the Parsonic Party said it must go, which led to a touching little speech from our guide:

'I am,' he said, 'of good family and was once well off, but now I am glad to take ten shillings a week for caring for this Castle. But I am not here in the winter.' He here paused a moment and sighed, and shook his head sadly. '*Some* visitors,' he continued, 'give me tips; *some*, but not all. No! not all!'

On this the Parsonic Party retired into corners and felt in its pockets and whispered to one another as to the amount forthcoming. We speculated later as to what the search produced, but we had no information.

When they had gone, the little gentleman came running back. He took us back into the Chapel and told us about it all over again. Then it began to rain and he scuttled off for his overcoat, and, coming back, we all squeezed into a window-seat, where we were sheltered. Here we began to discuss the

former owners of the Castle. It had come to the great William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, through his wife, who was the daughter and heiress of Richard de Clare. Her mother was a daughter of Dermot, king of Leinster. They had had five sons who all were successively Earls of Pembroke, and all died without children. William was buried at the Temple Church in London, where his effigy still remains, and that of one of the five sons also. His wife was buried at Tintern.

Besides these five sons, they had five daughters, who all seem to have married men of rank, and who eventually brought to their respective husbands a fifth of the wide possessions of their great father and mother. The daughter of one of these ladies, herself an only child, married one William de Valence, half-brother of Henry III. He was the son of Isabella, widow of King John, who married as a second husband Hugh of Lusignan, Comte de la Marche. William took his name from his birthplace, the Cistercian Abbey of Valence a few miles south of Lusignan. Evil times fell upon these Lusignans, and they came to their half-brother, Henry III, for aid, and he kindly provided William with a rich wife, this lady, Joan, who, among other little trifles, brought him the Castle of Goodrich in her pocket. One of the five Marshal sons, Earl Walter, had died in the middle chamber of that Keep at which

we were gazing. It seems to have been always the fate of this Castle to go by the spindle side, and be a handsome sort of wedding-present. From the de Valences it passed by marriage to Richard Talbot. His wife, Elizabeth, had been badly treated by the Despensers, who had imprisoned her and forced her to sell them her estates—no doubt at a small price! However, Richard Talbot got them back again when Edward III came on the scene. The great Talbot, Shakespeare's 'Talbot,' was this gentleman's grandson I think. He, too, must have been here. What stately ghosts must wander here of moonlit nights!

Then our friend turned to lighter themes, and told us that not long before Mrs. Patrick Campbell was sitting where we were, with her daughter Stella. He gave us a little passing sketch of the lady's admiration and appreciation of the beauty of the ruins. But now the rain had ceased, and we said we would go up the Keep. We entered by a door which had been made in Henry VII's time, for, when first built, they wisely made no entrance below, but arranged one on the first floor, which they approached by a ladder that, like Robinson Crusoe, they could draw up after them. The stone stair was rather bad and worn, but at last we emerged on the top, which is overgrown with bushes and grass. A railing protected the edge,

on which we were besought, almost with tears, not to lean. The view is beautiful and interesting. A green, wooded, fertile landscape. On one side our guide pointed out Symond's Yat; below us curved the river, and we could see the line of a Roman road coming from Ariconium to the ford on the Wye and going on to Blestium, which is Monmouth. He also spoke of the Vaughan family who own Courtfield, where Henry V was brought up by the Countess of Salisbury; that lady lies buried in Goodrich Church. But time was flying, and now *we* said we must go. 'Oh! but I must show you the perfect part!' cried our friend, and he led us back to the entrance towers, and then by a narrow, dark passage into the porter's room, where a small window would allow that functionary to address anyone who had crossed the drawbridge but was not yet admitted to the Castle. Of the probable phrasing of such a dialogue our guide gave us a dramatic sketch in a stentorian voice. He also showed us some initials carved on a stone in a wall. The 'A' in one he declared to be similar to the 'A' with which Albert Dürer signed his works, and so probably is of that date. The other initials were in form like those used in James I and Charles I's time.

We now said good-bye to our guide, not forgetting the tip, and, thanking him for entertaining us

so well, started for the Church. Passing through the village we saw what is called an Edwardian house. It has a circular projection at the back like the apse of a tiny chapel. We arrived at the Church porch just as a violent storm of thunder and lightning burst overhead. As the Church was locked, we had to wait in the porch till the rain abated a little. It was a large porch, with two windows and a little side door besides the principal entrance. As I stood looking out at the rain a brilliant flash of lightning seemed just to pass across my face, with a sound like the brushing of a bird's wing when it flies close to you. I do not think I ever *heard* lightning before.

When the rain abated a little I ran to the Rectory for the Church key, and we investigated the interior, which consists of nave and north aisle and no chancel. The tomb of the Countess of Salisbury is an altar-tomb on the left hand of the altar. It is a plain slab with small pointed arches below, but there is no inscription or figure. An antiquarian friend once told me that tombs in such a position were often used for Easter Sepulchres.

We now hurried off to the station, but missed one train and had to wait a long time for another. We arrived back at our lodgings in time to have lunch and tea together at about five o'clock. On the Other One expressing her opinion that we

had had a very satisfactory day, the Third Party exclaimed :

'What! you call it satisfactory not to have lunch till five o'clock?'

'What does it matter about lunch,' cried the Other One loftily and sententiously, 'when you have accomplished what you intended to accomplish?'

CHAPTER XVI

Symond's Yat

THE next day was Sunday, and we went to church, which is a fine lofty building with slender pillars and pointed arches. There are two aisles to the south of the nave. The chancel is long, with Tudor windows on the north. At the east end of the principal south aisle is a group of very interesting monuments to the Rudhall family. The oldest is of the time of Henry VII, two recumbent figures in marble. Another, of the time of Elizabeth, is mural; while a third is very splendid, erected by a lady to her husband. She lies beside him in Stuart dress, and surely the face is a portrait. A clever woman that, who managed her household with a firm hand! The most pathetic is one erected to the memory of the last of the Rudhalls, a young soldier with a distinctly Stuart-like face in the garb of a Roman general. It was erected by a maiden lady, one Milicent Sure. Alas! what romance lies perished there!

At Ross one does one's level best to evade Mr.

Kyrle, Pope's 'Man of Ross,' but it is almost impossible. He and his poem are, figuratively speaking, thrown at your head from every shop window that has postcards in it, and there are not many places of business without those adornments. Here in the Church, of course, is his monument, and an ugly thing it is, and some of his elm trees are still alive in the churchyard. The tree in the Church is dead, but they have put a creeper up to try to disguise the fact.

In the afternoon we walked to Wilton, a little village about a mile off where there is a ruined castle which used to belong to the Chandos family. You cross a fine bridge over the Wye and see the ruins at once on your right hand. As we approached the gate we found to our surprise that part of the old castle had been converted into a dwelling-place, and that the old walls were girdled round by a garden, brilliant with flowers. We hesitated at first as to what to do, but, being exhorted to courage by the Other One remarking that one can but die once, rang the bell, and, a neat maid-servant appearing, we inquired if we might see the Castle. She immediately admitted us and escorted us round. A huge fragment of the ruined building, with Tudor windows, stood on the right as we entered, and then, passing the residential part, we found ourselves in what had been the courtyard of the Castle, still surrounded by the massive and

lofty walls of the old structure. The centre space was occupied by well-grown vegetables, peas and beans and cabbages, and also by espaliers laden with ripening fruit. But all were bordered by bright flowers, and the frowning old stone walls and all this wealth of beauty made a most delightful contrast. The Castle had evidently been quadrangular, with circular and octagonal towers at the corners: we saw the Carnarvon arch in one tower. When we came out, we walked all round the Castle and returned to the road. It was built in the time of Stephen to defend the ford. The Chandos family also owned the Manor of Brydge Sollers, where we had seen the neglected church a few days before, and seemed to have taken their name of Brydges—or, more anciently, Brugge—from that place. One of the family was the notorious James Brydges who made such an enormous fortune as Paymaster to the Troops in the time of Queen Anne, and who, instead of being punished for his peculations, was made a Duke by that good Protestant Whig, King George I. He built an enormous mansion near Edgware, and lived there in almost regal state; but being given to speculation, lost so much of his wealth in South Sea and other ventures, that, when he died, his son had to sell the said mansion, which, being too big for anybody else, was all pulled down and destroyed.

There were three Dukes of Chandos, and then the title went with a lady to the Dukes of Buckingham; but that title, too, has now disappeared from Whitaker's list. *Sic transit*, etc.

We now walked along by the side of the river by a footpath which led again into the road by which we returned. It was a very beautiful, rich landscape that spread before us: fine woods and pastures, and the river flowing tranquilly between. Great stormy clouds swept across the sky; now all was gloomy, and then a flash of sunlight lit up the masses of trees against the dark background. Returning by a lane we noticed on our left—we have an inveterate habit of getting off a main road if possible—we came on a picturesque old house, and just opposite in a garden stood the base and broken shaft of a Cross. Whether there had been some monastic building there, or whether these were the remains of some wayside cross, we could not discover.

On the bridge is a very elaborate Sundial with four sides and the dial arranged for telling the different hours as the sun goes on its journey. Below was carved this inscription:

'Esteem thy precious Time
Which pass so quick away.
Prepare you for Eternity
And do not make delay!'

I do love sundials and their mottoes, and yet they make one smile sadly, and, perhaps, a little cynically. They are monuments to that Experience which always comes too late to be of use to the individual, and which, if proffered to the young for their aid and enlightenment, is only scoffed at. They are like the Wisdom which crieth at the gates and is set at naught! Nobody believes that Time flies till it is flown, and it is too late to amend those mistakes which are punished so much more severely than sins in this world of ours.

In the evening we again went to church, and had a good sermon from a clergyman whom we supposed to be the Rector. The text was 'I will be as the dew upon Israel!'

When we came out we wandered about the churchyard, which is spacious, and shaded by splendid elms. We came upon a decaying Cross which marks the spot where some three hundred people who died of the Plague were buried. The inscription is 'Libera nos Domine!' What horror and grief and anguish lie quiet and forgotten there!

It was a cold, clear evening, though clouds lurked about the hills, but we hoped it would be fine the next day, when we were planning to go to Symond's Yat.

But those hopes were not fulfilled. Monday, August 23, broke unpropitiously. There was rain

in the night, and the sullen, misty, drifting clouds were not encouraging, but, urged to what seemed a rather crazy expedition by the Other One, we took tickets for Lydbrook. We could have gone all the way to Symond's Yat, but our landlady, whose advice turned out as inferior as her accommodation, told us it was better to go to Lydbrook; it would save us a long climb, she said.

When we reached Lydbrook it was pouring with rain, so much so that we sat in the waiting-room and read the fashions in the *Daily Mail* aloud to one another, and very wonderful did those fashions sound. That done we found the rain was not quite so heavy, and as we were rather sick of waiting-rooms, we asked our way of the station-master. We found it was quite a long walk to Symond's Yat, and the kind man advised us most earnestly not to go by the fields: the grass would be soaking wet, he said; moreover, that by following the road we should pass a most interesting church, English Bicknor. So we started by the road, which wound through a beautiful bit of woodland with hills on either side crowned with trees and clothed with ferns, while over the hedges the Traveller's Joy had flung great masses of ivory white flowers. But it went on raining, a steady, fine, misty rain, the sort of rain that seems to bring out the greenness of a green country to a degree quite indescribable.

We walked through greens of every depth of violence—a green, green world and a grey, grey sky and slanting raindrops steadily pouring. On we trudged, the little fringe at the wayside of purple knapweed and yellow St. John's wort and pink mallow hardly touching the emerald world through which we waded.

But at last a house appeared, and then we saw something flaming red through the trees, and there was English Bicknor Church with a brand-new, scarlet roof which seemed to shoot out a colour fist at you and almost knock you down. But the tower looked old, and so did the walls, and entering the churchyard there was a man clipping the grass on the graves. We called to him to know if the Church was open. He said it was not, but lugged a huge key out of his trousers pocket, and so let us in. We all three gave an ecstatic shout as we saw Norman arches and capitals to the pillars. Nearly all these capitals are different in design, but the last arch on the north side is most richly carved with bird and beast ornaments. It was rather filled up by the pulpit, which might just as well have been placed on the other side, so as to leave these beautiful mouldings clear. The chancel was rather deep and, we thought, of later date. Behind the organ there had evidently been a chapel of some sort, for there was a piscina and holy water stoup;

also a low, arched tomb with the recumbent figure of a priest in very rough, primitive sort of carving. In the chancel the remains of a curious incised cross and some letters aroused our curiosity; but we could make little of it, and our friend the gardener could tell us nothing but that architects thought the tower had stood where the east end now is.

In the north aisle we found two recumbent female figures apparently of early date. At first we thought they belonged to each other, but then we saw they had only been placed side by side for convenience. The dress was rather similar, but the headdress differed. One woman seemed to be holding her heart in her hand. Outside in the churchyard was a heap of old stone roofing which showed what had preceded the scarlet roof! Alas!

Our gardener could give us no information about the Church, but he directed us to a footpath which led us into the famous Bicknor Walks, a beautiful way along the crest of the cliffs which tower above the wooded banks of the river. We followed this woodland path, but still the rain rained and the mist hung over the hills, and yet, for all its wetness, it was lovely. Here and there great pinnacles of rock started up out of the clustering trees, and we could see the valley narrowing below us, and the grey, steel-coloured line of water winding along. Presently an old lady popped out

of the wood upon us, and demanded twopence each. We said she ought to take half-price as we had come to see the view, but there was no view to see. However, she treated that argument as a joke, and we paid our toll.

So onward along the path till we came out on the rocky knoll where is a flagstaff, and which is called Symond's Yat. 'Yat' is said to mean 'gate,' and 'Symonds' the name of the owners of the land who charged a toll for coming through it. But why a gate on the top of a rocky cliff? However, the view was both curious and beautiful, for the river seems to take most inexplicable twists and turns, and you think at first there must be two rivers at least. We tried to pick out the Little Doward, a hill which is a British Camp said to have been occupied by Caractacus, but at last the rain drove us downwards to shelter at the *Rocklea Hotel*, where we had lunch. Now, while we were so occupied, the rain ceased and the sun shone out on a calm scene of beauty not easily matched. The hills rose steeply on either side the stream, and here and there jutted out in crags and pinnacles of rock which looked like the remains of ancient castles. Below us the river flowed swiftly past a small island. We had been rather grumbling at the Wye for not babbling. Tennyson says the Wye babbles, so, of course, it ought to babble; but

we had found it silent, sliding, gliding mysteriously without the sound of rush or ripple. But here it began to babble dutifully, and from above the island to some distance below, it babbled and sang most melodiously. We walked along the bank for some distance: the hills were veiled in soft mist, and then the sun shone out again and turned the swift current to silver white, while, where the slack water flowed more slowly, the long green weeds, and the ambers and browns of the river bed made a lovely colour through the translucent tide. Surely there are few things more fascinating in this world than the watching of flowing water.

But we had not very long to linger, for if we lost the four o'clock train back there was not another for three hours, and though the weather had improved, it was not quite to be trusted, and we still had a sense of dampness clinging about our apparel. Just before we departed an excursion train from Hereford steamed into the station, and out of it poured a tide of humanity—fathers and mothers with flocks of children, and babies in arms, and provision baskets, and everything to make life cheerful and happy!

On the Little Doward there is said to be a cave in which hyenas used to live. They shared it with Primitive Man and Woman! How thankful one ought to be that one was not born in those days,

or if one was, to have forgotten all about it! Fancy sitting shivering inside such a place, and hearing the hyena laughing cynically as he was strolling home, and perhaps only having one of those very inadequate stone weapons that you see in museums, to defend oneself with when he arrived. Would one have been tempted to throw him a baby or two on condition that he kept outside? Seeing that excursion train seemed to put it into one's head!

CHAPTER XVII

Monmouth

AUGUST 24 was a very grey and cloudy day. The question to be decided and finally settled was whether we should leave the train at Symond's Yat, and go thence to Monmouth by boat, or, for fear of rain, make the whole journey by train. The Third Party elected to cycle. The other two took tickets to Symond's Yat and discussed the subject by the way. One thought it might rain, and that if it did rain they would get wet. The Other One admitted both propositions, but met them by the counter statement that it might not rain, in which case they would not get wet; also that if they did get wet, past experience led to the conclusion that in course of time they would get dry again, whereas if they should miss seeing the Wye now, they might never have the opportunity of doing so again. This seeming the weightier argument, it was determined to brave the weather.

On leaving the train we were attacked by a

crowd of boatmen eager for the privilege of escorting us; but, with some difficulty escaping their attentions, we made for the *Royal Hotel*, where the mistress had promised to keep a boat for us. Her son, a nice boy of about fourteen, escorted us to the boat, and we started. The man who rowed us was most skilful and intelligent, and told us all about the places that we passed. The river is very shallow in parts, only practicable for boats drawing not more than three inches, and there are odd currents. In one place our boatman had to relinquish his oars and make use of a pole. He told us that though the row to Monmouth would be accomplished in an hour and a half, it would take him three good hours to return. We passed the hill of Little Doward, where there is the hyenas' cave and an extensive Roman Camp, some of whose trenches are visible from the river, and Oyster Island, so called because Ostorius held his leaguer there. Then two lordly swans came sailing by: these are the property of the Crown, for all the adjacent Forest of Dean, which comes down to the water's edge on the left bank of the river, is Crown demesne. Our conductor pointed out a fine house belonging to a Mr. Bannerman, nephew of the late Premier, and the tiny old church at Dixton, so close to the river that it has been much injured by inundation. The Vicarage is on the other side

of the river, which seems an inconvenient arrangement. Our boatman deplored the absence of sunlight, but the scene could hardly have been more beautiful. The grey sky deepened the shadows, and imparted an air of mystery and melancholy which gave an additional charm.

We were sorry to arrive at Monmouth and quit that gliding, dreamy river and our boatman, who was a person with most gracious and gentle manners and address. But we had to disembark at the Wye Bridge, and soon we met the Third Party and were settled in at the *Angel Hotel*, where we were very comfortable. Monmouth is delightfully situated. Everyone knows that, like Macedon, it possesses a river, but not everyone knows that there are two. These two, the Wye and the Monnow, meet just outside the town, which lies between them in a circle of green hills. After lunch we inspected the Church, which was rebuilt in 1736 in a starved imitation of Pointed Gothic. The tower looks older, and with its spire is rather fine and elegant. In 1832 the beautiful ruins of the Priory were pulled down because they obstructed the view of a neighbouring house. Part of the old Priory, however, was spared, and forms the National School, and there is one fine Tudor window which goes by the name of Geoffrey of Monmouth's window. 'There is good men porn at Monmouth.' But

this window must at least be two hundred years later than Geoffrey's time, for he died in 1154. Baring Gould, in his 'Book of South Wales,' tells us that 'that supreme prince of liars, Geoffrey of Monmouth, gave to the world his History of the Britons in 1147. It is a tissue of the grossest fables.' Gerald de Barri, who wrote in the same century as Geoffrey, tells us of a Welshman who had the faculty of seeing evil spirits. 'Once when he was much tormented by the demons, he placed the Gospel of St. John in his bosom, when they immediately vanished, flying away like birds. Afterwards he laid aside the Gospel and took up the History of the Britons by Geoffrey, when back they came and swarmed not only over his body but also over the book in his bosom, thicker and more troublesome than before.' Geoffrey was Archdeacon of the Church in Monmouth, and in 1152 was made Bishop of St. Asaph, partly on account of the reputation he gained from this book.[1]

[1] Note by the Other One.

Is not Mr. Baring Gould's epithet—prince of liars—a too harsh judgment on Geoffrey of Monmouth? Most experts seem to agree in the truth of Geoffrey's statement that his history was a translation—and in the later parts, perhaps, an amplification—of the old book which Walter, the Archdeacon of Oxford, found during a journey through Armorica. That it is fabulous in great part does not prove that Geoffrey was consciously lying, any more than that the early historians of Rome were consciously lying when they gave permanent form

A better man than he, Henry V, was a native of Monmouth, and his statue stands in the market-place. 'I'll tell you there is good men porn in Monmouth.'

We walked to the Monnow Bridge and admired the old gate, the only one remaining of the original four. Just beyond the bridge is the little Church of St. Thomas, one of the very oldest in the district. It has been mercilessly restored by Wyatt, but much that is beautiful remains. The glory of the Church is the richly decorated Norman chancel arch. The chancel is very dark, and the arch stands out with splendid effect from this dim background. There is a door on the south side, which appears to be of Saxon date, and heavy galleries handsomely carved of dark, polished wood. Out-

to the early legends and traditions of the Eternal City. Giraldus certainly calls Geoffrey's History fabulous, and so it is, but he himself states the Trojan ancestry of the Britons as a matter of undoubted fact. That it contains miraculous stories is also true, but Giraldus's own book is full of such; but for that reason we do not label him as a liar, or doubt the truth of much of his writing. It was an age when men, clever and observant men even, like Giraldus and Geoffrey, believed such tales.

There seem to have been two translations of this venerable work: one from the original Breton into Latin, and another from this Latin into Welsh, which appears to indicate that the Arthurian legend was really of Breton origin. And if Geoffrey had not preserved that venerable romance, think what we should have lost; what poems would never have been written! I think we should be grateful to the good Archdeacon, not call him bad names!

side, at the meeting of the roads, is a handsome modern wayside Cross on an old base. Returning we went into a stationer's shop to buy some post-cards, and seeing one of White Castle, which struck us as a fine ruin, an intelligent young man began to talk, and he told us that this Castle was one of a triangle of castles, i.e. White Castle, Grosmont Castle and Skenfrith, which were built to defend Monmouth. He directed us how to find the remains of Monmouth Castle, which has been mostly destroyed to build a big house—the Militia headquarters, or something of that sort—but there are some fine fragments still standing, with the remains of walls and windows which make one regret the destruction of the whole building. It was not apparently dismantled in the Commonwealth times, as most of the castles were, for we read that Henry Somerset, second Duke of Beaufort, was born here in 1684. It must have been also within these walls that Henry V first saw the light.

CHAPTER XVIII

Raglan Castle

WE had meant to catch an early train to Raglan Castle, but they were so late with our breakfast that we found it was impossible to get to the station in time; so we decided to walk, and started off at 9.45. It had been very wet in the early morning, but began to clear, and presently the sun shone out and the clouds gathered themselves up into huge, white snowy mountains with gorgeous glooms of shadow below. Our road led through an undulating country with vivid green pastures, and woods and copses mostly of oak and ash, now showing the dark tones of late summer. We crossed the little river, Trothy, from which Troy House, the seat of the Duke of Beaufort, is said to take its name. Presently we saw a little Church on our right hand, and found it was Mitchell Troy, where men were busy repairing the tower. Just then a shower arrived and we took refuge in the Church, which was open. It seemed to be late Perpendicular, for the pillars had no capitals,

the mouldings running unbrokenly up into the arch. In the south aisle the lid of a child's stone coffin was built into the wall. But the most interesting thing was a broken churchyard cross which stood a little way from the south porch. It had a base of three steps overgrown with moss and a few tiny ferns, and from this rose a slender broken shaft. This shaft was ornamented with little oval bodies, with three holes in them and a sort of leaf-shaped carving below each. The guide-book stated that the cross was sculptured with mystic letters, but we could not find them. In the south-west corner of the outside of the tower is an ancient inscription supposed to refer to the founders of the Church ; but the men on the tower warned us not to go near lest something should fall on our heads, so we were not able to decipher it. Just outside the gate of the churchyard was a very interesting object, and that was a set of stocks. There were six holes, so three persons could have sat in them, and the post and staple for fastening the chain were all there.

When the rain was over we trudged off again, up and down, but chiefly up, till we had a beautiful view of the hills beyond Usk, all in cobalt blue, with the green country stretching between us and them. At length we saw the towers of Raglan Castle peeping through the trees, and we found a

path across a meadow leading to them. The Castle does not stand on a steep hill like Montgomery and Powis, but surmounts what the guide-book calls a gentle eminence. From this side the eminence appears very gentle indeed. Arrived before the entrance, we saw a White Board with an inscription thereon. It warned visitors that they had to pay sixpence to see the Castle, and a shilling if they wished to photograph any part thereof. It also informed them that they must not, once admitted to its precincts, make speeches (we wondered if this was for the benefit of the Suffragettes) or hold religious services, and, above all, neither eat nor drink therein. We did not want to make speeches, or to hold a revival meeting, but we did want to eat the sandwiches we had been painfully trying not to forget or lose, so we adjourned to a meadow adjoining and ate them up to make sure of them. We had nothing to drink, so we had rather a dry repast. Then we went up to the Castle, paid our sixpences, and one shilling for the benefit of the very amateur photographer of the party, and entered.

Raglan Castle is very fine and very interesting. It is not a very early castle, at least, what remains now was built in the reign of Henry V. First you approach two hexagonal towers which flank the entrance. They are in rather a good state of preservation, with

RAGLAN CASTLE.

fine and elaborate machicolations. Passing under the arched passage, where there seem to have been two portcullises, you enter what was once the paved court. To the right is the breach made by the cannon of Fairfax when he besieged the Castle in the Civil War. To the left is the splendid Banqueting Hall, with a noble oriel window reaching almost from floor to ceiling. Right opposite is a pentagonal tower which is said to have been the kitchen. Behind the Great Hall is a smaller one, with passages communicating with the kitchen and the Buttery hatches. The Castle has a double quadrangle, and this second court, called the Fountain Court, is on the other side of the Banqueting Hall. Here, too, was the Chapel and the principal suites of dwelling rooms apparently. One set of State apartments was occupied by Charles I after Naseby. All round this court are towers and walls, and remains of galleries and rooms, and then, through an arched gateway, you pass out on to a lovely terrace of exquisite turf which leads you round to the Keep and its moat.

The Keep of the Castle, the Yellow Tower of Gwent, stands outside the present Castle, and probably dates, in its foundations at least, from a much earlier period. It is hexagonal in shape and five stories high, and it is surrounded by a moat all to itself. One side is gone, for it was

blown up by Cromwell's orders after the siege, although he had promised in the Treaty of surrender not to injure the Castle.

Certainly Raglan is very beautiful. The old walls are so rich in their colouring, and so decked with ivy and the wild growth of creeper and moss and fern. The turf that carpets the ground is so brilliantly green, the views of the rich country round so varied, and seen that day to perfection under sunshine and cloud, with the fleeting shadows travelling fast over meadow and hill. Yet one could scarcely shake off a feeling of great sadness to see this grand and stately dwelling so ruined, so broken, so desolate. When it was all complete and furnished with the beauty and richness of the age, when it was full of colour and life and movement, what a splendid sight it must have presented!

We do not seem to hear much of Raglan till it became the possession of Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester, who was an illegitimate son of Henry Beaufort, third Duke of Somerset. This last we think was the Duke who was beheaded in Hexham market-place after the battle of Hexham. Somerset's childhood was spent in exile in Flanders, for he seems to have been knighted by the Archduke Philip, then himself a child. But he was befriended by Henry VII, who kindly paid for three yards of cloth of gold to make him a handsome gown for the

coronation. He seems to have repaid Henry by much service for his care, and spent his life in embassies and Court offices. He married Lady Elizabeth Herbert, daughter of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and was created Baron Herbert in right of his wife. A little later he was made Baron Herbert of Raglan, Chepstow and Gower, and in 1513 Earl of Worcester. He must have had a most interesting life, travelling abroad a great deal and rubbing shoulders with all sorts of great and wonderful persons. He went with the Princess Mary to France when she married Louis XII, and as Lord Chamberlain had to make all the arrangements for the King at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Henry VIII seems to have found him as useful as did his father; but he died in 1526, so could not had been the Lord Chamberlain who in 'Henry VIII' objected to the 'pagan cut' of the young courtiers' clothes. He was present, however, when Henry met Charles V at Winchester. What a Master of Pageants he would have made. One would like to know if his wife went about with him or stayed here at Raglan. From this worthy gentleman descended the Marquess of Worcester who when more than eighty years old held the Castle of Raglan for the Royalist cause. At length he was forced to surrender, but on most honourable terms. The garrison marched out with

flying colours; but then Cromwell, breaking his solemn promise, had the old man seized and thrown into the Tower of London. He was released a year or two later, to find his castle dismantled, plundered and half blown up with gunpowder. The poor old man died in poverty and broken-hearted a few months after his release. He was buried at Windsor. His son was the scientific Lord Herbert who has some claim to having anticipated the steam engine. His grandson was wise in his generation: he made friends with Cromwell, who granted him a 'pretty liberal allowance.' Cromwell at that time was enjoying the possession of the Herbert estates in Monmouthshire, and there seems to have been an agreement that the young Herbert was to have them back at Cromwell's death. Of course, they ought to have gone to the father, who wrote to some one complaining that his son was intriguing with the Protector against him. But this wise person was evidently a sort of Vicar of Bray, for he later on ingratiated himself with Charles II, and in 1682 was made Duke of Beaufort.

A descendant of this family was Lord Raglan of Crimean fame. Wellington described him once as 'a man who could not tell a lie to save his life.' He was created Baron Raglan of Raglan in Monmouthshire in 1852.

After we had spent as long a time as we dared

at the Castle, we went off to look at the Church, which we found to have been restored out of all interest. In a chapel in the north aisle lay some broken monuments of the Earls and Marquesses of Worcester. Dirty and mutilated they lay on the floor, while a man who was doing some repairs seemed to find them a convenient resting-place for his tools and rubbish. There is a tablet on the wall stating that the monuments were destroyed by the Roundhead soldiers ; but that they were so used two or three hundred years ago does not seem a sufficient reason to leave them in such a dejected and miserable condition. Why not raise them up at least, away from the village boots and tool bags ? Is it not a pious duty to care for the tombs of one's ancestors ?

We now found that if we hurried to the station we should have time to catch a train to Usk, a town we were anxious to see. We found Usk, though it is really very ancient, to be quite a cheerful, suburban-looking place. It is not grey and mournful like Monmouth, but has a pert and chirpy air. We went to a shop first and had a rather poor but very expensive tea, and then climbed up to the Castle, standing well above the town, which lies cushioned down among trees in the valley by the river. The Castle is only a shell, but one great round tower is finely placed, and looks very imposing

as you climb up. Here friend Giraldus came, and in this very Castle, he tells us, many people were duly signed with the Cross. They had been converted by the Archbishop's sermons, and by those of 'William, the worthy Bishop of Llandaff, Alexander, archdeacon of Bangor acting as interpreter for the Welsh.' The Castle in his time must, I think, have been in the possession of the Clares; later it passed on by the sister of that Earl of Gloucester who fell at Bannockburn, eventually to Richard, Duke of York, who is said to have been fond of the place. Richard III was born here. We stayed a little while, but there was not much to see or sketch, and then went off to find the Church. This proved so interesting that we regretted we had not gone there earlier.

We entered by a Perpendicular porch, embattled, with a groined ceiling, and then found ourselves in a large church consisting of nave and aisle, or rather, of two aisles divided by pointed arches, with a sort of hollowed capitals and round abaci. At first we thought there was no definite chancel—it was growing dusk, and the Church was dark and dim—for a lofty and very handsome screen ran across the east end. Passing through the screen we found the choir seats and organ in this screened-off portion: the pillars of this one bay were ornamented with four slender shafts attached to the circular

central drum. But beyond this again was a fine Norman arch, deeply recessed, with columns and cushion capitals, and this gave on to a square chancel formed by three of these recessed arches. Then it dawned upon us what it was. The sanctuary was really the base of a fine Norman tower. We rushed outside to verify our suspicion. We could only get round to the north side of the Church, and then we saw that we were right. The tower, a low Norman tower with a turret, *was* at the east end of the Church! We tried to see the south side, but that is all enclosed in what is called the Priory, a house with grounds extending right up to the Church wall. Later we learnt how this anomaly came about. The Priory was a House of Nuns and they had used the choir of the Church, the general public being only admitted to the nave. After the suppression of the Monasteries, the choir had been pulled down, leaving the base of what had been a central tower for chancel. We were very sorry we had not time to see more; but not only was it growing dusk, but we had to run to catch the last train back to Monmouth. We had a hurried glimpse of the bridge and the river, and then scurried off past 'Salmon's Corner' to the station and caught that last train.

CHAPTER XIX

A Vain Search

ON August 26 we made an early start and really caught the 8.55 train to Redbrook, which is the first station on the way to Chepstow. We had seen on the map a piece of the Dyke marked, and we went to search for it. We had left our Dyke crossing the Wye at Bridge Sollers, and had not seen it since; indeed, we had wilfully neglected it to go looking at scenery and rivers and castles. Now we felt it our duty to pick the poor thing up again. Leaving the station at Redbrook, we walked along the road which wound by the riverside, but where we expected to find our friend was only a steep hill covered with dense wood. At last we found a narrow path leading straight up through the wood, and climbed to the top of the hill, 540 feet. If the Dyke had been on the side of that hill we must have crossed it. The top was quite clear of trees, and we saw a small farmhouse, to which we made our way. An elderly woman came out as we approached the gate, and we asked her if this was the Grove, a house we had been expecting to see.

'No,' she answered; 'this is not the Grove. This is Cocksbury. The Grove is nearer Redbrook.'

'Can you tell us if Offa's Dyke passed near here?'

No! She had never heard of Offa's Dyke; but to a further question as to whether we could get to St. Briavels this way, she replied that we could. She indicated a track and a gate. If we went through that gate, and followed the track, we should find ourselves at St. Briavels.

Baffled we went back to our considerations of certain banks and depressions that we had been noting on the open hillside before Cocksbury. We followed one or two of these, but were in every case brought up short by the indications ceasing altogether or our meeting with impenetrable obstacles. We looked round at the view, which was beautiful. We were surrounded by hills, some less, some more lofty than that on which we stood. We could catch a glimpse of the river, like a grey ribbon, winding below us, but heavy grey clouds hung all round. Even where we stood there did not seem to be a breath of air, and the greens of the distance grew dim and dark under the low pall of cloud. At last, giving up the Dyke in despair, we decided to walk on to St. Briavels, where we knew there was a castle, and a church which might soothe our disappointment. So we went through

the gate which had been pointed out to us, and came into a field of wheat which had been reaped and was standing in stooks. But here we heard the whirr of a reaping machine, and I rushed off to make inquiries, as where there is a reaping machine there would be that seldom seen object—a man. There were two, but though they had heard of the Dyke they knew little about it, and thought we should find it near the station. So we prosecuted our way to St. Briavels. We crossed several fields and passed a lonely barn, and then, at the top of another hill, a cluster of very ancient and ruinous cottages; but no human being seemed within. Nothing was alive but a few sheep in a paddock, and some hens with large families of chickens in various stages of growth. Here we came upon a downward path. We could see the tall tower of St. Briavels before us, and we realised that we had to go down and up again to reach it.

So we went down and down and down, through, indeed, a hollow way, a narrow track only practicable for one at a time, along a miry, stone-strewn path, deep between high banks and hedges full of tansy and knapweed and bracken as high as ourselves, with bushes of hazel and bramble fanning overhead. It was extremely hot and close, and myriads of flies buzzed around us and made us feel like explorers in some tropic land. Steeper and steeper grew the

pitch of the path, and more sunken between high banks, but we reached the bottom at last, crossed a road, and then a rivulet by a tiny bridge, and so set our faces to climb the opposite hill. There were a few cottages there, and we learnt that it was Nauk. Fortunately, the lane up was a good firm road, and not quite so steep as the ancient pack-horse path (for such we believed it to be) by which we had descended, and we struggled up at last to St. Briavels, situated on the very top of the hill.

First we looked at the Church, which has been much and indiscreetly restored; but the modern tower is tall and handsome. There are beautiful Norman pillars in the south aisle, and a square of Early English arches where a central tower must have stood. The small arches leading from the side aisles into the transept show curious snake-head endings to the mouldings, resembling some which are to be seen at Glastonbury. The chancel is new and extremely ugly, and the fine tomb of the de Warens has been ruthlessly destroyed by the restorers. The two recumbent figures are lying in the chancel, not side by side, but head to foot, and the poor little children are standing on the opposite side parted from their parents. We learned from a notice in the vestry that the cleaning of the Church is entrusted to a Guild, and reflected that if we were in authority we should disband the Guild and have

a charwoman. But perhaps the Guild, like ourselves, was enjoying a holiday.

The Castle was close to the Church, only parted from the churchyard (which latter, by the way, was overgrown with a tall white umbel which had a very pretty effect among the many tombs) by the road, so we went across and rang the bell at the great door of the Castle. Our summons was answered by a small maiden, who told us in reply to our request for admission, that sixpence each would entitle us to the privilege. On production of the coins we were invited to enter through a very small wicket, and found, to our delight and surprise, that the Castle is furnished and inhabited. The gateway stands between two great round towers, and these are complete, and every storey affords a convenient and comfortable room. The walls are very thick, with window-seats in every window. One room contained a very beautiful Early English fireplace, and the outside chimney is very elegant. It is surmounted by a Horn, that being the badge of the Wardens of the Forest who formerly lived here.

The Castle is now occupied by the Hon. Mrs. Campbell, and the fees paid by visitors are given to the Waifs and Strays Society. We saw the Chapel, which is used for family prayers, and then climbed some very ancient wooden stairs to the roof. There is a glorious view over the country, and down

below us we could see the garden and the moat which surrounds the Castle. The garden, in fact, is the old Castle court, and the grey walls make a charming background to the brilliant green turf and gay flowers. We were shown the old kitchen, where the arrangement for turning the spit still remains, and finally the old dungeon, a deep, circular structure reached from a trap door in the floor of one of the gate towers. The Keep has been destroyed, but part of the circular staircase is still visible. It is delightful to see such a dwelling; it has all been so skilfully worked out. The doorways and arches are left in the plain stone, while the walls are distempered white. The furniture has been carefully chosen, so that it is possible to imagine that the Castle presents no very different appearance now from what it did in its original condition.

We had now seen all that St. Briavels had to show, and we were tired; so we started on our way to the station, some two miles distant. We had a lovely walk down through charming woodland scenes. The heavy clouds had cleared away, and the hills on the other side of the valley took beautiful cobalt-blue tones, against which the sunlit foliage of oak and ash shone out in vivid golden green. At last we reached the level of the river, and after one more hunt for that elusive Dyke, we

gave up the quest and made our way to the station. It was a great disappointment to miss the Dyke, but the beautiful walk over the hills and the Castle of St. Briavels had given a very enjoyable day.

This was our last evening at Monmouth, and it was enlivened by the advent of a charming party of Americans—father, mother, and a sweet girl of sixteen. We were able to indulge in a game at Bridge, a welcome treat after our long abstention.

CHAPTER XX

Chepstow

ON August 27 we left Monmouth, and reached Chepstow in time for lunch, finding pleasant quarters at the *George Hotel*. After lunch we saw the Castle, the grandest of all the castles, with the finest position. The eastern side rises from a cliff washed by the River Wye. It stands thus on high ground, with a deep, dry moat separating the landward side from the city wall. There are four courts, each strongly and independently fortified. We entered through a small wicket in the great wooden door studded with huge nails, and with a strengthening lattice work all over it on the inside. On the right is the guard-room, followed by the kitchen, and this again by the Great Hall. This hall has a puzzling variety of windows, and must have been rebuilt and altered many times. The Keep stands between the second and third courts. This is the oldest part, and was built by William Fitz-Osbern in 1067. His son, Roger, was deprived of his estates, which were transferred to the

de Clares. This Keep is a fine lofty, oblong building, of which the lower portion is certainly of Norman date. There are courses of Roman tiles in its walls which must have been taken from some Roman building. The upper portion has been pierced with fine windows, and it is said was occupied by a Banqueting Hall. At the further end from that by which you enter is a great pointed arch, with a row of small round-headed arches recessed within it. There are also the remains of a very fine clustered arch some twenty feet, I should think, from the end wall, of which the spring is left on either side. A large double-arched window, with a circular moulding above, is between these two arches of the hall. The remains of corbels, for the support of some lower roof, seem to suggest that at some time the Keep walls have been heightened.

The rest of the building is Edwardian, and we recognised the Carnarvon arch which we had seen at Goodrich. We could walk round the top of the walls, and the views from them and from the windows are delightful. Each window is the frame of an exquisite picture. Now it is the Wye with the green hills beyond, a white sail in the foreground and the white seagulls above; presently it is the walled town, with its ancient Church, and the groups of merry children playing on the green sward below us. The western gate is even more

strongly fortified than the principal entrance, but much less impressive in appearance. There is a fine drum tower at the south-east, with great stone figures on the battlements to represent defenders of the Castle. In this tower Henry Martin, the Commonwealth man, one of those who signed the warrant for the King's execution, was imprisoned for twenty years. His wife lived with him and, accompanied by a guard, he was allowed to visit at the homes of the gentry of the neighbourhood. Opinions will differ with regard to his political conduct, but in private life his behaviour left much to be desired, so that, on the whole, his lot was certainly no worse than he deserved. We subsequently saw his tomb in the churchyard, with a long inscription composed by himself. He was originally buried at the east end of the Church, but a succeeding vicar could not endure the thought of a regicide within the sacred building, and turned him out.

In an upper storey of this tower are the remains of an oratory with a lovely east window. It has a very pointed arch with small flowers or rosettes set close together all down the moulding. There is a piscina and one seat by the altar.

Before Henry Martin, Chepstow Castle held another prisoner of widely different character and opinions—Jeremy Taylor, said by one of his

biographers to combine 'the reason of an angel with the piety of a saint.' Being present with the royal army in his capacity of King's chaplain, he was taken prisoner in the defeat of Colonel Gerard before Cardigan Castle in February 1644, and imprisoned in this Castle, but only for a short time.

Though twice besieged and taken by the Parliamentary troops, the walls are still intact. The splendid position, the great length of the walls, the massive towers and the great variety of the windows cause us to consider this the finest ruin we have yet seen.

On Sunday we attended service at the Parish Church, and afterwards remained to examine the building. The west door is Norman: there are arched recesses on either side and three fine windows over the door, but these are surmounted by an ugly modern tower. Entering, we find a Norman nave with triforium and clerestory and a fine modern chancel in Early English style. The Church was cruelly restored in 1840, when the two Norman aisles were destroyed. There is an old Norman font and a very elegant one of the fifteenth century, the base adorned with flying buttresses. We saw a splendid monument to the second Earl of Worcester (who must have been a son of Somerset of Raglan) and his wife with the date 1549, and another of a lady—a full-sized, recumbent figure, with two

little husbands kneeling above her and twelve children below. The twelve children all belonged to the first husband, so that the second took her with her dozen thrown in. As she survived number two for twenty-two years, it makes one fancy that perhaps they were a little too many for the poor man. She wears a widow's hood.

One of the most moving scenes in the Winchester Pageant held in 1908 was by many acknowledged to be the trial and condemnation of Earl Waltheof. All who were present will remember it, set as it was in those incomparable surroundings of ruined castle wall, with the square Norman tower of the Cathedral rising beyond, and William of Wykeham's College among the trees to the left, all lit by brilliant sunshine in the blue June weather. But the last thing that we expected was to meet here in Chepstow with one of the chief personalities of that poignant drama. But so closely linked, so intimately interwoven and entwined are the warp and woof of our Island story that it proved so. Roger Fitz-Osbern, who has been mentioned above, was the son of the man who built the Keep of the great Castle on the cliff here. Roger was his father's second son, and while his elder brother inherited the Norman estates and titles, Roger became Earl of Hereford and took the English and Welsh lands. This Roger had a sister who was asked in marriage

by Ralph of Wader, Earl of Norfolk. For some reason the Conqueror did not approve of the match; but in his absence in Normandy it was carried out, and the wedding-feast took place at Exning in Cambridgeshire.

> 'There was that bride-ale,
> To many men's bale,'

says the old rhyming Chronicle.

Now, at that wedding-feast, most unfortunately for him, was one Waltheof, Earl of Huntingdon and Northampton, an English nobleman who had married (also to his great misfortune) the Lady Judith, a relative of the Conqueror. Probably, at that ancient wedding-breakfast, too much wine and ale and mead were drunk; certainly, a great deal of foolish and harmful treason was talked, and a loose kind of conspiracy formed to which Waltheof swore later that he had given no real consent. But the other two Earls really meant business, but had not enough power to carry out their intentions. All went out in a splutter, but poor Waltheof, betrayed and accused by his wife, lost his head early one fair May morning on the steep chalk hill dedicated to St. Giles, which rises so abruptly at the east end of the long street of Winchester. This is not the place to tell the romance of his burial, but of the many sad processions that

have wound up that historic street, few seem sadder than that, when the monks of Crowland, having disinterred the body from its hasty grave under the green sod of the hill, carried it, still 'fresh and bleeding' after its fifteen days' burial, to the Abbey among the Fens which he had benefited so generously.

Of the other conspirators, Ralph fled to Brittany, the home of his mother's kindred, and there was joined by his wife, who meantime had bravely held the Castle at Norwich against her husband's enemies, but Roger of Chepstow was taken prisoner while trying to cross the Severn. He, being a Norman, was not doomed to death as was the Englishman Waltheof, but was flung into prison and safely kept under lock and key. Freeman tells of him that 'he was constantly reviling and murmuring against his sovereign, and in one case offered him a marked insult. One year at the Easter feast, when the King made gifts to his lords, he sent a gift also to his imprisoned kinsman, a gift of goodly raiment, of silks and costly furs. Roger piled up the King's present in a heap and at once set fire to it. The news was brought to William. "The man is too proud," said he, "who does such scorn to me: but, by the splendour of God, he shall never come out of my prison in my days." William kept his word and his successor kept it

after him: Roger, the son of Fitz-Osbern, died in prison.'

In East Anglia a large part of the lands of Ralph went to the Bigods, which family later on became Earls of Norfolk, while the de Clares seem to have been benefited by Roger's fall.

CHAPTER XXI

The Wyndcliff and Tintern Abbey

ON August 28 we started to walk to the Wyndcliff, but the Third Party clung to her miserable machine. It was a lovely morning, with a nice fresh breeze, and the walk was most enjoyable. In time we found a sign-post bearing the pleasing inscription, 'Wyndcliff ½ mile.' This was the more gratifying as we were already high up and should avoid the steep climb from Moss Cottage. The road led us through green fields to a gate marked Wyndcliff Gate. This could not be opened, but there was a stile, and we entered a pretty path through the wood. The path rose almost imperceptibly and at last, after reaching the highest point, began to descend, leading to a kind of belvedere just below the summit, commanding a splendid view, and one that is really very curious. You look across the sinuous windings of the Wye, which is right below you, to the Severn and the land beyond. You can see where the Wye joins its greater neighbour, and the two or three little islets at its mouth.

Unfortunately it was low tide, and the Wye ran, a narrow stream, between wide banks of mud. It was not very clear, but we could see a glimmer of light on the roofs of Chepstow in its green nest, with the dark tower of the Church at its lower end. We sat there for some time, and presently the Third Party, whose progress had, as usual, been much impeded by the cycle, appeared. Now began a discussion as to the best means of reaching Tintern. Some friendly strangers, including a Man, became interested in the question. The original plan had been to walk down the zigzag path to Moss Cottage on the high road, but we found that if this course were adopted the Third Party would have to carry her machine all the way; to this she promptly and decisively objected. Another way, as the cookery books say, was to return by the way we had come; but again the cyclist stated that in lifting her cycle over the stile she had almost put an end both to herself and the machine, and she would not incur the risk again.

But now the Man took up his parable, and told of a third way by a Roman road, both shorter and easier, and interrupted by only one stile, over which he volunteered to lift the impeding article. It cannot be denied that there are occasions when a man is useful!

We were all much cheered by the words 'Roman

road,' and set out merrily. The machine got over the stile quite easily under masculine direction, and crossing some fields we came to a farm. There, leaning over a gate, stood a very handsome, dark-complexioned man with some children clustering round him, and we asked him what was the name of the place. He said it was Porth Casseg, and then spelt the name for us, because, he said, so many people would call it 'Port,' which was wrong. We found afterwards that the name is mentioned in many of the old charters of grants to the Abbey of lands and manors and churches. Some of these old charters are still extant, but many are supposed to have perished in the plundering and dismantling of Raglan Castle.

We soon found our Roman road and followed it, first between high hedges and then on among woodland and ferny hills. It was a narrow, green lane and had been paved, or well mended, with various shaped and sized stones. An ancient British trackway, a Roman road, a pack-horse path; so we traced its genealogy! Deeper and deeper into the wood it led us between banks of hart's-tongue fern, and then, in the more open parts, its mossy sides were starred with a thousand delicate plantlets exquisite as the carpet of a fairies' haunt. At last, after passing through a deep, thick wood where the path was rock, we came into a more lane-like piece,

and caught a glimpse of the gable of Tintern below us. Here a farm-cart came along, and we had to stand up on the bank to give it space to pass.

'Rather a rough path for the motor-car!' said the man who was driving.

'There is not too much room!' we replied.

'And yet it used to be the old coach road!' he called over his shoulder as the cart jogged and bumped along.

Tintern is most beautifully situated. As a Cistercian foundation, it was bound to be distant from any populous town or busy haunt of men; but, certainly, whoever selected this spot must have had an eye for natural beauty. It stands in a green meadow by the side of the River Wye, and round it rise wooded hills which shelter it from the cold winds and yet open out enough to let the valley be as a cup of sunshine. Probably it was remote enough when the Abbey was founded on that ninth day of May in the year of grace 1131. On the left bank of the river, opposite the Monastery, was—and still is, I think—the royal Forest of Dean, and through the heights above runs Offa's Dyke. The Constable of the Forest lived at St. Briavels Castle, where we were the other day. On the three other sides of the Abbey lay the woods of Nether Gwent, belonging to the Lord of Striguil, its founder.

It is said that a hermitage existed here from very

early times. It must have been one of those hermitages of which we read in that wonderful 'High History of the Holy Grail'! Along that old path we have just trodden came riding—one is perfectly certain of it by some interior assurance—Messire Gawain and Lancelot of the Lake, and the Good Knight, the son of the Widow Lady, 'riding a great pace through the forest till that it was evensong and the sun about to set—and he looketh before him and seeth the house of a Hermit and the chapel in the thick of the forest and a spring flows forth in front of the Chapel right fair and fresh!'

Here in this ideal spot, in the reign of Henry I, Walter Fitz-Richard, Lord of Striguil, which is Chepstow, a son of the great family of de Clare, founded this Abbey for the benefit of the souls of himself and his ancestors. Surely one may still whisper a prayer for them, though one hopes they have been in the Joy of Paradise this many a year. The monks came from the Abbey of L'Aumone (near Blois), itself a daughter of Citeaux, the Mother House of the whole Order of Cistercians, who, it may be remembered, were reformed Benedictines. It was a very strict Order, perhaps the strictest in Christendom. In four years from this date, Stephen, son of the Comte de Blois, was to be king of England. One wonders if the Lord of Striguil had any inkling of that fact when he chose an Abbey close to the

principal seat of that family to be the Mother House of his new foundation.

But little, if anything, of the building of Walter remains. The Abbey lay in the lordship of Striguil, and passed with the daughter of Strongbow to the Marshalls. One of the five daughters of the famous William Marshall carried it in her wedding *cassone* to the Bigods of Norfolk, and it was the son of this lady who built the church, the ruins of which remain.

Tintern is, I think, the most lovely ruin which I have ever seen. It is still so perfect that it only seems to need roofing in, and the windows filling with glass, to be ready for service. The architecture—it really is impossible to imagine anything more beautiful. The west window, of which the tracery is almost complete, gives one the joy of a perfect thing. One feels that the mind which could conceive these marvellous buildings, and the hands that wrought them out, must have been truly inspired. And yet our forefathers only thought them worthy of destruction, and probably the remoteness of this Abbey from a busy town alone saved it from utter extinction. If it had been nearer any place in need of building material it would probably have shared the fate of Hyde Abbey or Lewes Priory or a hundred other noble churches. One often hears the monks spoken of as lazy, ignorant, gluttonous and gross-

minded; but if they were so, their works belie them. No industrious, enlightened Protestant has been able to rival them in building, and they seem to have been pioneers in the arts of agriculture and gardening. I suppose it requires some particular quality in human nature to build up and plant, and a different one to knock down and root up; and together the two impulses form the rhythm of the wave of evolution, the necessary pulsation in the great Time Engine, the throb of the heart of the ages! So in the end

'Nought may endure but mutability.'

Tintern was never one of the large, important abbeys. I do not think its Abbot sat regularly in Parliament, though he was called there on occasions. Many great and noble men and women came here from time to time, but only one king is reported to have ridden down that green road to its hospitable gate, and that was the unfortunate Edward II. Our friend Giraldus does not seem to have brought his Archbishop here, though the Abbey had been founded fifty years when he took his little trip. It seems to have been rather off the principal highways, for the Forest of Dean lay between it and Monmouth, and the road by Caerleon led to Newport and not to Chepstow.

We revelled in the beauty of the scene. The tender grey of the stone, the windows through which

the blue sky shone, throwing up their lovely forms; the brilliant green turf, soft as velvet, the background of wooded hills,—who can describe it? But what a splendid sanctuary it must have been in the days of its glory. The 'high embowed roof,' the stately tombs, the carving of stall and screen, the rich colour of vestment and banner when the Mass was sung, the flashing of candles on the jewelled altar plate, the blue, curling, incense smoke—it must, indeed, have been a gorgeous scene.

We bought a good guide-book at the entrance, and with its aid we traced out what is left of the Abbey buildings which lie to the north of the Church. In the latter there are a few broken tombs, most of them incised crosses and much defaced, but the sepulchres of the nobles and their wives who founded and enlarged and, from time to time, enriched the Abbey, and were, many of them, laid to rest within its walls—Clares and Marshalls and Bigods—are all broken and destroyed and lost for evermore. It now belongs, I believe, to the Duke of Beaufort, who must feel rather full of castles and abbeys and the historic past.

We were loth to leave this lovely spot, but Duty spurred us. We had read in Murray's guide that near a place called Brocksweir we ought to find that elusive Dyke. We consulted a native, who told us that if we ferried across the river we should find a

path which would lead us to Brocksweir, where also, he informed us, there was a bridge. As to the Dyke, he had never heard of it; but we might ask! So he ferried us over the river, and passing through a field full of ducks and goats and guinea-fowls, and two little pigs who chased after us, grunting and squealing in the most ridiculous fashion, we picked up our Roman road, which led us through a wood to Brocksweir. Here was a post-office and, to our joy, the people in it *had* heard of Offa's Dyke; so, following their directions, we toiled up a hot, steep road, and then, turning to the right, descended by a footpath to a brook and then climbed up the side of another hill. Here we thought we saw the Dyke, but when we got near it seemed but an ordinary bank. We looked around, and perplexity took possession of our souls! However, we went on a little farther, like the old woman in the nursery rhyme, and there we met a clergyman and some boys, so we asked them for information.

'Oh!' they cried; 'you must go to Mr. Griffiths at the farm. He knows all about it, and he will be delighted to show you.'—'Mr. Griffiths?'—'Oh! yes! it is up there.' A wave of an arm indicated the road.

So up we went, up and up and up a steep, rough lane, through woodland till we emerged on to an open and extensive common surrounded with woods. We stood and gazed around. Not a sign of a

farm, not a sign of a house, not a chimney top, not a barn or a shed! Nothing that was likely to contain a Mr. Griffiths or any other human being could we detect. And time was flying, and there was a train to be caught. Reluctantly, after one last, lingering look for that elusive Dyke, we turned back and retraced our steps slowly down that rough mountain-road to about the place where those deluding youths had told us wrong. But here the Third Party cheered our drooping spirits by declaring she saw the Dyke: we followed her eager footsteps—and certainly there was something that looked uncommonly like it. It went on quite nicely for a bit, and then—it disappeared! But we decided to make up our minds that it was the Dyke.

We had tea at the post-office, which cheered us, and then we crossed the bridge and hurried off to the station and caught our train. We were very tired, but satisfied with at least part of our day. But we should have liked to see Mr. Griffiths!

CHAPTER XXII

Caerleon

WE had decided that while we were at Chepstow we must go and see Caerleon, the Camelot of the 'Idylls.' It had nothing to do with the Dyke, but it had to do with many other interesting things, and it would seem a slight on early devotion to Tennyson to pass it by, so we had treasured up a day for it. Two of us took the train to Newport, and there had to change for Caerleon. We also had some little time to wait, so we utilised the interval by boarding the tramcar and going off to see the old Church of St. Woolos.

Newport is a busy, bustling town, like a small Liverpool, and its Parish Church stands on the top of a hill. It is a large and curious sort of building which no doubt would be interesting if we had had time to study it, but in the hurried glimpse we had it has left but a confused idea in the memory. We had to rush back and catch that train to Caerleon, at which place we arrived at about eleven o'clock.

Caerleon was, I must confess, a disappointment. It is a rather uninteresting village, with scarce any

visible remains of antiquity. Excavation has gone to prove the existence of a Roman amphitheatre, and there are trenches left open where you can see the venerable stones. There must have been much more of it in the time of Giraldus. He and his Archbishop, leaving the Castle of Usk, passed through Caerleon on their way to Newport, where they spent the night, probably in that castle whose ruins are visible as you cross the river in the train. 'Caerleon,' he states, 'means the City of Legions, Caer in the British language signifying a city or camp, for there the Roman legions sent into this island were accustomed to winter, and from this circumstance it was styled the city of legions. This city was of undoubted antiquity, and handsomely built of masonry, with courses of brick, by the Romans. Many vestiges of its former splendour may yet be seen; immense palaces, formerly ornamented with gilded roofs, in imitation of Roman magnificence, inasmuch as they were first raised by the Roman princes, and embellished with splendid buildings: a tower of prodigious size, remarkable hot baths, relics of temples, and theatres, all inclosed within fine walls, parts of which remain standing. You will find on all sides, both within and without the circuit of the walls, subterraneous buildings, aqueducts, underground passages, and what I think worthy of notice,

stoves contrived with wonderful art, to transmit the heat insensibly through narrow tubes passing up the side walls.

'Julius and Aaron, after suffering martyrdom, were buried in this city and had each a church dedicated to him. After Albanus and Amphibalus, they were esteemed the chief protomartyrs of Britannia Major. In ancient times there were three fine churches in this city: one dedicated to Julius the martyr, graced with a choir of nuns; another to Aaron, his associate, ennobled with an order of canons; and the third distinguished as the metropolitan of Wales. Amphibalus, the instructor of Albanus in the true faith, was born in this place. This city is well situated on the river Usk, navigable to the sea, and adorned with woods and meadows. The Roman ambassadors here received their audience at the court of the great King Arthur, and here also the archbishop Dubricius ceded his honours to David of Menevia, the metropolitan see being translated from this place to Menevia according to the prophecy of Merlin Ambrosius: "*Menevia pallio urbis Legionum induetur,*" that is "Menevia shall be invested with the pall of the city of Legions."'

Alas! alas! All but the woods and meadows and a few mouldering stones have vanished of the city that drew forth such eloquent description. And

as to King Arthur—well! the place does not 'feel' a bit like King Arthur; and though there are Roman remains, I believe no vestiges of the City of Camelot have ever been discovered. Good old Sir Thomas Malory confidently states that Winchester is Camelot, and since I have seen Caerleon I give my firm allegiance to him. In Caerleon you cannot imagine

'Camelot,
Built by old Kings, age after age, so old,
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange and rich and dim; for when the roofs
Tottered towards each other in the sky
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watched to see us pass: and lower and where the long,
Rich galleries, lady laden, weighed the necks
Of dragons, clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers,
Fell as we past, and men and boys astride,
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan
At all the corners!'

Now, one can picture all that at Winchester, where is also the Minster where the King and Queen heard Mass, and the meads where the knights jousted; but here—No!

Perhaps researches into Welsh history give at first a sense of disappointment with regard to King Arthur, for Tennyson's picture of the blameless King grows a little smirched in the process. But yet, as the one conception fades, a deeper, keener interest takes its place. 'The low sun gives the

colour,' and a truer understanding of the mysterious legend gradually grows up. Of all the places which we have seen in this journey, I think the one that had most the *atmosphere* of the romance was that deep, solitary valley of Church Town, with its mighty hills clothed with black forest, its little flower-fringed rivulet, and its lonely Church. There, indeed, King Arthur might have come after he entered 'into the great forest Adventurous and rideth the day long until he cometh about even-song into the thick of the forest. And he espied a little house beside a little chapel and it well seemed to him to be a hermitage. King Arthur rode thitherward and alighteth before this little house and entereth thereinto, and draweth his horse after him, that had much pains to enter in at the door, and laid his spear down on the ground and leant his shield against the wall, and hath ungirded his sword and unlaced his ventail. He looked before him and saw barley and provender and so led his horse thither, and smote off his bridle—and it seemed to him that there was strife in the Chapel. The ones were weeping so tenderly and sweetly as it were angels, and the other spoke so harshly as it were fiends. The King heard such voices in the Chapel and marvelled much what it might be. He findeth a door in the little house that openeth on a little cloister whereby one goes

to the Chapel. The King is gone thither and entereth into the little Minster and looketh everywhere. . . . The voices ceased as soon as he was within.'

King Arthur goes up to the altar, and there he finds a coffin, and within it lies the Hermit clad in his vestments. He is not quite dead, and the King thinks he will stay with him to the end. But a stern voice bids him depart, for a judgment is going on and he is interrupting the proceedings. The Hermit is being judged, the devils and the angels are both claiming the soul of the dying man, and the controversy is not concluded till the Blessed Virgin appears and declares the soul is hers. 'No wish have I,' she says naïvely and honestly to the fiends, 'to take him from you by theft, for had he been taken in your service in suchwise as he has been in mine, yours would he have been all quit!' 'The devils go their way all discomfit and aggrieved: and the sweet Mother of our Lord taketh the soul of the Hermit that was departed out of his body, and so commendeth it to the angels and archangels that they make present thereof to Her dear Son in Paradise. And the angels take it and begin to sing for joy *Te Deum laudamus*. And the Holy Lady leadeth them and goeth her way along with them!'

What a picture would Fra Angelico have made of that lovely procession as it wound through the green glades of the forest!

Yes, one could imagine all that at Church Town, and even at Montgomery and Clun, and across all that beautiful land. There one can enter into the spirit of that wonderful, bewildering, but most fascinating book, 'The High History of the Holy Grail.' There the knights come riding through the forest and as the sun is setting they come to some fair castle, where damsels disarm them and bring water in golden basins for the knights to wash away the rust of their habergeons, and fetch rich robes to 'do on' in place of their armour, 'surcoats of scarlet purfled with vair.' And in the morning they hear Mass sung before they ride forth again on their way to the castle of the rich King Fisherman, where is the Holy Grail, and where the King hath fallen into a weakness because Percivale and Gawain did not ask the mysterious question: the word which should have been spoken, but was not! The story differs a good deal from that told by Malory; but through it all runs the allegory and the mystic, quivering emotion that comes 'when the dedely fleshe' begins to behold the 'spiritual things.'

But we did not experience this at Caerleon; perhaps our stay there was too short. We went, of course, to the Roman excavations, where, in an open green space which used, I believe, to be called King Arthur's Round Table (does not the veritable Round Table hang in the High Castle Hall at

Winchester ?), have been discovered and partially excavated the remains of an amphitheatre. Then we followed an ancient bit of wall which we were told was part of the old town wall. From here we saw a church on the top of a hill on the other side of the valley, and made our way to it up a very steep lane. But it was not very interesting, not so much so as a venerable house close against the churchyard wall which we thought might have been the old Rectory. It was all locked up and there seemed nobody alive about, so we sat down among the graves to rest and try a little sketch. Then suddenly arrived the Third Party, full of some wonderful excavations she had explored on her way. For once the Cycle had scored, and naturally we felt a little injured that she had seen more than we had. Therefore we immediately began to make the most we could of Caerleon, lest she should be unduly puffed up ! But I am afraid she did rather sniff at it.

We went to the Church, which has been much restored, and then to a museum in the village. We were followed into that rather depressing little building by a small flock of village children, a biggish boy taking upon him the duties of cicerone. Then we betook ourselves to the station, and so wended our way back to Chepstow !

CHAPTER XXIII

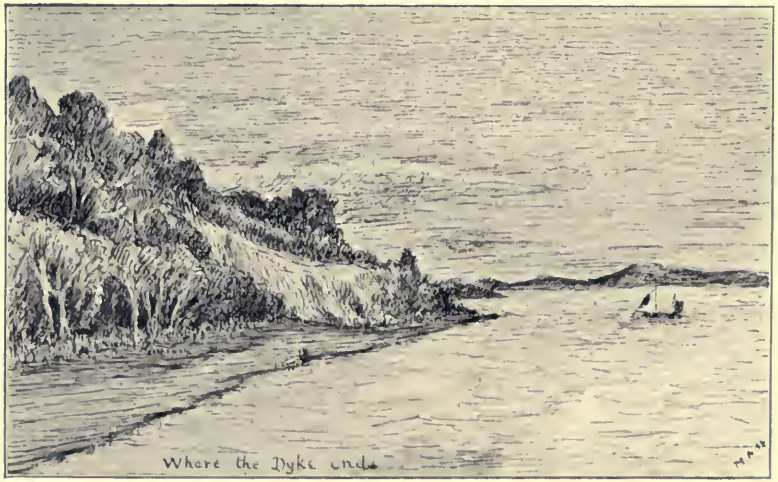
The End of the Dyke

WE had one more walk to take, one more search, and then our quest would be ended, our Pilgrimage fulfilled. We had read that the Dyke was traceable through Sedbury Park, and that it ended by the Severn Sea; so, on the Sunday afternoon, we set off for Beachley, which is situated at the end of the tongue of land which here divides the Severn from the mouth of the Wye. We crossed the bridge over the Wye, and mounted the hill by a steep footpath which brought us on to the road running along the ridge of hills between the two rivers. At length we came to the lodge of Sedbury Park, and inquired about our Dyke. We were told to go to the top of the next hill, where we should find another lodge, close to which ' Olling's Dyke ' was to be found. We went joyfully on and, true enough, there was the Dyke, large and marked and serious looking. We asked and received permission to walk along it, and a small child was sent to show us the way. It was

a fine piece of Dyke with well-defined fosse, and great trees growing out of it, and we trod its ridge with delight. But suddenly we were brought up short by a most workmanlike wire fence enclosing a warren, a wild piece of woodland consecrated to rabbits! Probably the very effectual wiring was as much to keep the Bunnies in as to keep us out; but, anyway, we were obliged to take to the field and follow our friend with our eyes only. But then it ran up a steep bit of ground, and we lost sight of it among trees and undergrowth.

We then descended to the flat shore of the Severn, and turned and walked along below the cliff, looking up in the hope of descrying our friend. It was a steep bit of red cliff, fringed and draped with trees and bushes and clinging masses of ivy. Below it lay a flat, narrow strip of greensward, then the muddy beach and the grey, flowing Severn rippling in mimic waves on the shore. Across the river a low line of coast was visible, with hills beyond. Two or three fishing-smacks trailed slowly through the brown water.

But our attention was fixed on the Dyke. As two of us made rapid sketches of the view a voice caused a start. The Third Party had scrambled up the cliff and stood triumphant on the end of the Dyke, where, she cried, was a stone! This was too much to be endured, so, reckless of Sunday



WHERE THE DYKE ENDS

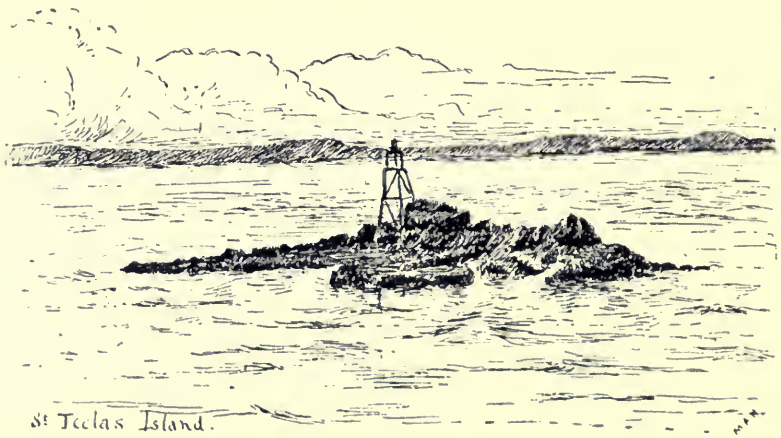
attire, we scrambled after her, and soon stood at the termination of that which we had tracked so far. There he came on his last climb, and some one had ornamented the final spot with a venerable stone, while a smaller one seemed to resemble a footstool, and gave the character of an ancient chair. Does King Offa come sometimes on moonlit nights and sit there and listen to the eternal surge of the water and the sighing of the trees ? Surely, surely !

But we had not long to stay and meditate, for we wanted to go on and find St. Tecla's Island. We scrambled down again and walked along the level sward till we found a rough lane which led up to the road and then on to Beachley, which is a tiny hamlet—just a few houses, and a little inn, and a quay on the Severn. A big steamer laden with timber was passing close by as we reached the quay. We also caught a glimpse of the island, but the tide was flowing in fast, and they told us we could not get across to it. At low tide it seems you can reach it on foot. We went on over a corn-field, where the barley was partly cut and lying in heaps, and there, just beyond the point, was the tiny island, with a broken bit of wall and a lantern on an iron stand. Here it is said a maiden named Tecla lived as a hermit, dedicated to religion, till some wild sea-rovers sailing by murdered her. The date given is A.D. 47, which seems impossible.

Could Christianity have penetrated to these distant wilds only fourteen years after our Lord's death on the Cross? Possibly she may have been confused with the maiden Thecla, who, sitting at an open window in Iconium, heard St. Paul preaching, and became a convert and suffered many things in consequence!

The afternoon had grown very gloomy now, with sweeps of fine rain from time to time. The grey-brown water surged on the rocks with a wild and melancholy cadence. Across the wide estuary the opposite coast lay a faint, grey rim of land; the breeze sighed amid the twisted boughs of an old thorn tree and rustled the dry bents of grass, and the long, low clouds hung in sullen folds. One thought of the hermit maiden, and shivered at the idea of how extremely uncomfortable she must have been as she cowered in her tiny cell, her thin voice mingling with the plaint of wind and sea as she chanted her psalms and hymns. On stormy nights surely the waves must have washed across her tiny islet! What were her thoughts, her dreams and visions? Was she glad when the wild Sea Men slew her and set her soul free to take its flight to Paradise?

We returned to the little inn and had tea, and then walked back to Chepstow, delayed for some time watching the evolutions of an enormous flock



ST. TECLA'S ISLAND.

of starlings, who seemed to be going through some kind of drill. Clouds of birds came flying round: they divided and alighted on a row of elm trees, a certain company apparently appointed to each tree. Then suddenly they all poured out, a very fountain of birds, each battalion following in order, and then whirling and wheeling in a mass till division took place again. All these evolutions were accompanied by a chorus of cries, whistlings and chirpings. We watched their divagation a long time till, warned by the threatening sky, we hurried on. As we passed the lodge where we had picked up the Dyke, we saw another fragment of it on the other side of the road on which some one had piled some broken ancient stones. We had to climb up to them and say another good-bye—a last good-bye!

Thus ended our quest. We had found much more of Offa's Dyke than we had expected when we set out to track it six weeks before. We had wandered through a pleasant and a beautiful land, and we were furnished with plentiful material for thought and study through the winter months. We had not come across any tourists travelling with the same aim as ourselves, and very few of the dwellers in the land itself knew anything or cared anything about the ancient work. What local information

we had gathered was from the men who worked on the land—the farmers, the gamekeepers, the agricultural labourers. They came across it in their daily tasks; but the women in the cottages had scarcely ever heard of it. But to us it had proved indeed a golden thread on which we had strung the pearls of long summer days spent on hill and valley under the free air of Heaven. It had led us, too, along a great historic track where we had met with Kings and Warriors, Nobles and great Ladies, Saints and Hermits, Knights and Priests and People, and enriched our minds and memories with many thrilling and tragic pictures. Therefore we feel we owe a debt of gratitude to King Offa! May his soul rest in peace!

THE END

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